

SABBATH SCHOOL
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Paul Penno



Chapter 1

The Influences of Materialism

Recently a friend jokingly said to me, "Don't you know that he who dies with the most toys wins!" That's about as far as you can get from the compassionate generosity of God. But it's pretty close to what our culture is all about--a culture saturated with greed and headed for disaster. Millions of Americans seem to share this view of our modern wants, particularly as our economy continues its unparalleled growth.

Still, for the majority of us who have known hard times in our lives, today's consumer economy brings to mind Jesus' parable that has become known as the "Parable of the Rich Fool," the story of a man who had so much that he planned to build new barns in which to store his goods. And we remember well what Jesus said of him, "'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21, New International Version).

It has been said that we don't own our things; our things own us. How easy it is to be consumed by material possessions; hence, Jesus warned about "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19).

Think through just how easy it is for money, or the pursuit of it, to blind our spiritual priorities. How crucial that we keep this truth in mind as we seek to reach those whose wealth might have already blinded them.

At the same time, we all need a reality check. Some people live as if the one question that they will be asked on Judgment Day is, How much money

did you make?

Christ reverses our misplaced priorities. While possessions are not forbidden, they must be placed in perspective. Material goods are God's instruments designed to benefit humanity. They become blessings when shared rather than when hoarded. When hoarded, they become curses.

Materialistic persons, whether rich or poor, are in danger of sacrificing their eternal well-being for temporal pleasures. Eternal satisfaction is exchanged for passing fancies that deteriorate and become outdated.

Humans serve God or money, never both. Everyone, rich or poor, needs to be reminded: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Here is one simple reality. It is not possible to develop deeply spiritual thoughts if we feed our minds with violence, immorality, greed, and materialism. Our senses are the gateway to our minds. If our minds are bombarded with the stimulating scenes of Hollywood's entertainment, they will be molded by these sensual experiences rather than by the principles of God's Word.

Multiple millions of dollars are spent by media producers to manipulate our emotions, condition our thinking, and shape our values. We can be assured that the basic question that these entertainment gurus ask is not, "How can these productions prepare people for the soon return of Jesus?" The bottom line that motivates them the most is money.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians preparing for the second coming of Christ should reflect carefully before sacrificing their souls on the altar of the world's entertainment.

There are some parents who are so concerned about their children's Internet viewing habits that they have installed filters to block out certain sites. Others have done something similar with television. The purpose of these electronic filters is to let some things in while keeping others out. God has provided a "spiritual filter" for our minds. It has been carefully crafted to allow only those things into our minds that will build our spiritual experience with Jesus.

As long as you have a sinful nature or as long as you are in "the flesh," you are doomed to spiritual defeat. And this is what many professed Christians believe. Their experience constantly reinforces this idea for they find the flesh all-powerful. Appetite, illicit sex, sensuality, pride, jealousy, hatred, drugs or liquor, materialism, constantly beat back the Spirit, and they find themselves defeated time after time. Surely the Saviour's heart goes out to them.

If Jesus Christ is "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42), doesn't that mean He can save any person from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"? (1 John 2:16). Otherwise, the Bible is a farce. Our question is not, "Can He save" but "Does He"? Unless you answer "yes," you're not much of a witness for Him, are you? And just "preaching" about it seems empty and helpless, and only deepens the guilt that many feel.

Legalism is not the answer, however stern and strict. According to the apostle John, one can't deny the reality of the multitude of our built-in desires. By nature, you're drowning in them and you need a Life-Guard Saviour 100 percent. Don't think your own will power will succeed.

Before you start your new day you have prayed, "Father which art in heaven, ... Lead [me] not into temptation, but deliver [me] from evil" (Matt. 6:9-13). If you log on to Internet pornography, aren't you deliberately canceling that prayer? You're walking directly onto the devil's ground, doing

Peter's thing when he denied Christ by mingling with the worldly crowd who enjoyed the fun of watching Christ be crucified. By watching pornography you are crucifying Christ afresh in the person of the victims--supporting the business of their exploiters.

Jesus told it straightforwardly as only someone can who Himself goes to the cross: "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

You don't know what to do until you learn. The grace of God actively teaches you to say "No!" exactly as Jesus Himself did (Titus 2:11- 14, NIV). Now, thank Him, praise Him! Join Christ on His cross and let self be crucified with Him (you're never alone). The new covenant, not the old, is the answer.

The Adventist reform movement grew out of this concern for cooperation with the heavenly High Priest in His closing work of atonement. In a very special sense, God's people who follow Christ by faith have their attention focused on Him, not on themselves. Their motivation is not fear but a corporate concern for the final success of Christ's mission. A clearer understanding of the cross and the Saviour's sacrifice delivers them from vanity.

The glorious good news of it all is that never in world history have we had a better opportunity to find release from the crippling tyranny of being absorbed with self. God's people in these last days are to be the happiest, most free from pride, sensuality and materialism, the most selfless humans, the world has ever been refreshed to see.

Their lifestyle reform is not a do-it-yourself works program or a form of self-torture. It is a "sign" of an inner devotion to Christ and a preoccupation with Him (the 1888 focus) that demonstrates they have found something

more exciting to be concerned about than adorning themselves or indulging sensual appetites.

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 2

I See, I Want, I Take

The subtitle to this quarterly's lessons on stewardship is "Motives of the Heart." The most important aspect of the 1888 message is that everything depends on our heart motives. Unless we have accepted that we can do nothing to save ourselves, our attempts to ingratiate ourselves to God present a false gospel that is constantly infused with self. Without the union with and continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit, any righteousness we may think we have is considered by God as filthy rags.

The solution is a new heart, as David yearns for in Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart ..." He doesn't ask for God to patch up the bad spots on an otherwise pretty good heart. We must accept that God gave us the first body He created for us in the first Adam (see Paul's argument on the two Adams in Romans, chapter 5) and He "rebirths" us in the second Adam (Christ) and will give us a completely new body at the resurrection. The human race needs a Creator, not more "works" programs to make us think we're getting better.

God created bodies for us and everything that we need to support them physically and emotionally. Paul summarized the entire subject of our stewardship to God in Romans 12:1: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (New American Standard Bible). Using this passage, Ellet J. Waggoner reasons that because of God's infinite power and wisdom, "Nobody can add anything to Him. No one can put God under obligations to Him. No one can give Him something for which He should receive something in return." [1] It is only what God has given us that we can give back to Him.

In further analyzing this passage in Romans, Waggoner reaches the conclusion that since God created us and provided all we need, and He needs nothing--it is "reasonable that all should yield their bodies to Him, for Him to control. He alone has the wisdom and the power to do it properly." [2]

The logical extension of giving Him our bodies includes everything else He has given us to support our bodies, the most important of which is faith. In essence, God created us and equipped and empowered us to be good stewards of everything He has given us. The idea of stewardship has become associated only with financial responsibility, but it's much more than that.

Waggoner describes a complete attitude shift from what sin has given us. After the first Adam fell, our birth inheritance from him is embodied in the title of this lesson, "I see, I want, I take." We are born with self-centered pride as our motivation for everything we do. That sounds hopeless but God has consecrated a new and living way that starts with rebirth. It seems a simple solution, but our pride doesn't let go easily. We are not naturally inclined to be humble. Pride is always rearing its ugly head, mainly in figuring out ways to improve on what God has called "good."

"Pride Is the Enemy of Faith.--The two cannot live together. A man can think soberly and humbly only as the result of the faith that God gives ... The man who has confidence in his own strength and wisdom, will not depend upon another. Trust in the wisdom and power of God comes only when we recognize and acknowledge our own weakness and ignorance.

"Faith a Gift of God.--That faith which God deals to man is indicated in Revelation 14:12: 'Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.' God does not give faith to the saints only, any more than He gives the commandments to them alone; but the saints keep the faith, and others do not. The faith which they keep is

the faith of Jesus; therefore it is the faith of Jesus that is given to men." [3]

"Keeping" is generally what stewards do. They keep what they have been given. The unrighteous steward (Luke 16:13) was told that he was going to be fired for squandering his master's means. The unrighteous steward said, "I see, I want, so I take." When the master found out, he shrewdly granted discounts to the master's debtors, not to guarantee some return on potential "bad debts" for his master, but to generate good will so the debtors would take him in when he was fired. This steward was not "keeping" anything for his master, he was manipulating him. The master complimented him for his shrewdness, missing the steward's ulterior motives.

What is Jesus illustrating with this parable? We have learned that all people, not just believers are given faith. God gives us the freedom to keep it or use it for selfish purposes. Many make the mistake that since we are only given a "measure" of faith, it is our responsibility to grow it by exercise. In other words, God has not given us enough faith, so we must do our part. This is another way to deny God's power and sufficiency.

"In What Measure?--We have seen that faith is given to every man. This may be known also by the fact that salvation is given to every man, and placed within his grasp, and salvation is only by faith. ...

"The question is, in what measure has God given every man faith? This is really answered in the fact already learned, that the faith which He gives is the faith of Jesus. The faith of Jesus is given in the gift of Jesus Himself, and Christ is given in His fullness to every man. He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). 'Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ' (Eph. 4:7). Christ is not divided; therefore to every man is given all of Christ and all of His faith. There is but one measure." [4]

So our stewardship is based on keeping the faith of Jesus, which has been given to us in full measure without need for our improvement. There is no need for us to do anything but keep and cherish what God has given us. No one has this inclination of "motives of the heart" naturally, but if we lay hold on His promises by faith, we will have the mind of Christ gradually replace our hearts, which can only See, Want, and Take.

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellet J. Waggoner, Waggoner on Romans, p. 177.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 179; emphasis added.

[4] Ibid.

Chapter 3

God or Mammon

A fundamental truth underlies all human existence. No human being anywhere can claim rightful title to even one dollar as being his or hers. This principle, which is at the heart of the 1888 message, is taught in a well-known verse: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (John 3:16). Obviously, this means that "the world" was doomed to "perish" unless God gave that Gift. It's a blunt, straightforward recognition that "the world" (everyone, not just believers) owes everything to that divine Gift. No one can believe the gospel without recognizing immediately that he now relates to money and material things in a new way.

Another text states the same principle even more clearly: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). The original language implies that a new compulsion now grips the heart, stronger than the old compulsion of selfishness.

This powerful truth lays an ax at the root of our love affair with money. If we believe that Christ "died for all," that is the same as saying that we died along with Him and that if He had not died for all, we would all be dead and would therefore have nothing.

Ellet J. Waggoner says, "It makes a vast difference whom one serves. The servant derives his importance from the dignity of the one served. [The apostle] Paul served the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody may serve the same Master. 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his

servants ye are to whom ye obey?' (Rom. 6:16). Even the ordinary house servant who yields to the Lord is the servant of the Lord, and not of man. ... 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon' (Matt. 6:24). No man can serve the Lord and have other service besides that" (Waggoner on Romans, pp. 9, 10).

You may just now be wrestling with some temptation to put something you don't really need, or some person, as the object of your heart's devotion in place of your true Savior.

- Before you are tempted to sacrifice your soul, God shows you a glimpse of how wonderful Heaven is.
- Before you snatch at some earthly riches, He reveals to you the true wealth of His salvation "in Christ."
- Before you worship some earthly "idol," He shows you how precious is His eternal friendship.
- Before you seek fulfillment in some forbidden infatuation, He shows you the eternal preciousness of true love.
- Before you are dazzled by the "glory" of the lights of Times Square, He shows you a glimpse of the eternal glory of the cross of Jesus!

All this is in that blessed preamble to the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2). How can we be so stupid as to let anything in spiritual "Egypt" confuse and bewilder us?

So, what's wrong and what's right about our use of money? The Ten Commandments, if appreciated and followed, would long ago have solved the world's painful economic inequities. But they haven't succeeded. Some spiritual virus continues to create vast gulfs between the "haves" and "havenots."

Here's the Good News: When we understand and believe the inspired

preamble, when we appreciate what the Son of God has done for us, modern idolatry loses its charm. It's not the gold or silver or wooden crosses in churches that captivate our souls; it's the understanding of the love of Christ that is revealed at His cross. In the light of that cross of Christ, our beloved "idol" turns into "ashes" even before we worship it! All the glitter that once attracted us has lost its sheen and we actually begin to "glory ["boast,"The Revised English Bible] ... in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

God never asks us to give up something unless first of all He shows us how precious is the Gift He has already given us! Maybe we can say it this way: He never asks us to give up a stuffed doll until He shows us a precious live baby in our arms. He never asks us to give up a plastic toy car until first He shows us He has already given us a genuine new car.

Inheriting the wealth of the universe "in Christ" for all eternity--this is why you cannot place any other "gods" (mammon) before the Lord when you believe the truth of the gospel. It's not a works trip. It's a faith trip. Faith is like dynamite; it's powerful, it "works." It saves you before you sin! It saves you from sin!

Jesus' solution to our selfishness is not to shame us, but to share with all of us the good news that we can enjoy a dynamic, practical victory over the love of money.

One great little nugget of truth is in Galatians 5:16, 17. If you let the Holy Spirit hold you by the hand as you choose to walk with Him, you "cannot do the [evil] things" that otherwise your sinful nature would want you to do!

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland, et al. as noted

Chapter 4

Escape From the Worlds Ways

A steward is a manager, or keeper, of someone else's goods and property. In the Bible we first read of stewardship in Genesis 2:15 which states that Adam was made a "keeper" of God's earth and all that was in it. But because Adam believed Satan's lie about God's character, he lost his dominion and "delivered" his Master's "goods" to the enemy (see Luke 4:6; John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).

In Genesis 15:2, Abraham refers to Eliezer of Damascus as his steward. Joseph was made steward of Potiphar's household, and later steward over all of Pharaoh's domain. These are examples of wise and faithful managers of their earthly master's property. The Bible also tells us of unfaithful stewards, servants who say in their hearts, "my Lord delays His coming." They focus on their apparent spiritual wealth, knowledge, and position and fall into the world's ways, neglecting the work God set before them. They become Laodicean, not comprehending that they "are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17).

Beginning in 1844, God called a people out of the world so He could bring them to spiritual maturity beyond "Reformation theology" and the limited understanding of justification proclaimed by reformers such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), Jacobus Arminius (1560- 1609), and John Wesley (1703-1791). For nearly two millennia Satan worked to obscure the true foundation of justification, which is the faith of Christ. Many of the Pharisees, papists, and some Reformers taught that commandment-keeping ("works of the law" or sacraments of the church) was the way to justification, thus obscuring the truth that commandmentkeeping by faith is the result of justification in all who will

believe in the power of God to deliver from sin.

As a "called out remnant" the Second Advent people, who eventually formed into the Seventh-day Adventist movement, learned the vital importance of following their Saviour in His work as humanity's high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. They were called of God to proclaim "great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost"--vital truths that the Reformers and Evangelicals never had. These truths "are to shine from God's word in their native purity" through the "1888 message" of Christ and His righteousness. [1]

However, by the mid-1880s, Satan had caused much theological confusion. He well knows that when Christ's "most precious message" is fully accepted into the heart and proclaimed to the world, it will culminate in the finishing of Christ's day of atonement ministry. A. T. Jones commented on the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary when he wrote: "... we are plainly taught that the service of our great High Priest in the cleansing of the true sanctuary must be preceded by the cleansing of each one of the believers, the cleansing of each one who has a part in that service of the true High Priest in the true sanctuary. It is plain that transgression must be finished, and end of sins and reconciliation for all iniquity must be made, and everlasting righteousness must be brought in, in the heart's experience of every believer in Jesus, before the cleansing of the true sanctuary can be accomplished." [2]

Instead of preachers of righteousness by faith, as a people we became expert expositors and defenders of the Law of God, so much so that by the mid- 1880s "we [had] been at work on the law until we [were] as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain." [3] We reckoned it more important to rely on the law and our own ability to keep it, than to depend exclusively upon the Author of that Law, and thus we became confused stewards of God's final message to a dying world. As a result we have delayed the

second coming of our Lord. We must not blame God for the delay that is due to our own insubordination. [4]

During that time of spiritual confusion, God raised up two young men, A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, to bring a special message to His remnant people. "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. ... This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." [5]

We have remained in this world more than a century since this counsel was given, forcing us to ponder: Are we faithful servants of the message that God Himself commanded was to be given to the world; or are we unfaithful stewards, hiding the truth under a bushel; or worse, are we actively fighting against the proclamation of the message by distorting truth and history?

At the 1893 General Conference Session, Elder Jones quoted from a testimony from Mrs. White entitled, "The Crisis Imminent." "Something great and decisive is to take place, and that right early. If any delay, the character of God and His throne will be compromised." Then Elder Jones cautioned: "Brethren, by our careless, indifferent attitude, we are putting God's throne into jeopardy. ... Brethren, for the Lord's sake, and for His throne's sake, let us get out of the way. Let us get out of the way. The only way to get out of the way of God is to flee to Him." [6]

Getting "out of God's way" is in reality falling into His outstretched loving arms where He enrobes us in the personal intimacy of His own

righteousness. Only when we allow ourselves to be wrapped in His arms can we have a "personal relationship" with Jesus. Nestled in intimate fellowship, when we pray we are but whispering into the ear of our loving Saviour and, answering, He imparts the power of His Spirit to us. "Faith in Jesus Christ, personal faith in Jesus Christ, and receiving righteousness by faith, and the keeping of the Sabbath, seeing Christ in it, and receiving the seal of God, the perfect image of Jesus Christ, reflected in the character,--this prepares the character for the close of probation." [7]

"We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith; but what brings it? The Spirit of God; and when we have that, Christ dwells in the heart. Then it is the Holy Spirit that brings the personal presence of Jesus Christ; and in bringing His personal presence to us, He brings Himself. Then it is the mind of Christ, by which we may comprehend, investigate, and revel in, the deep things of God which He reaches down and brings forth to our understanding and sets them before us in their plainness. That is what we must have, in order to have the presence of Christ, in order to have the righteousness of Christ, in order that we may have the latter rain, in order that we may give the loud cry." [8]

"Getting out of God's way" also means that we cease damming-up the work through our resistance, and become willing to unashamedly declare to the world that the message we received during the "1888" era is indeed unique.

It is deeper than anything the Protestant Reformers or Pharisaical legalists knew, and more sublime than Evangelical theology, reaching to the very heights of the throne of God. Why is it important to focus on the uniqueness of the message?--because, unlike Reformation theology, the message of Christ and His righteousness reclaims from sin through the perfection of our characters, and proclaims everlasting righteousness in Christ.

The balanced understanding of justification by faith brought to us through Elders Jones and Waggoner, has significantly more depth than any previous exposition of the Gospel. "When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, it is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen." [9]

Appreciation of God's "1888 message" motivates us to careful stewardship in every aspect of our lives. It spiritually elevates us from the world and its alluring attractions, separates us from all unrighteousness, and exalts Christ and His righteousness as the only way of salvation. Justification, both the legal aspect and the application of that justification when "worked out" by the Holy Spirit in our personal lives (see Phil. 2:12, 13), will inspire others to embrace the truth of God's plan of salvation. Plumbing the depth of the "1888 message," we escape from the world's ways and find spiritual comfort and peace in a world that has gone awry.

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

1. See Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 473.
2. A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, p. 121 (2003 ed.).
3. Ellen G. White, *1888 Materials*, p. 557; see also p. 560, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 11, 1890.
4. See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 696.
5. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91,

92.

6. A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message--No. 3," 1893 General Conference Bulletin, p. 73.
7. A. T. Jones, "Health Reform by Faith," The Home Missionary, Nov. 1893.
8. A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message--No. 11," 1893 General Conference Bulletin, p. 246.
9. Ellen G. White, MS 5, Sermon, "Christ and the Law," Rome, New York, June 19, 1889.

Chapter 5

Stewards After Eden

We should begin asking the right questions at the right time. And the right time is this time of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, while our great High Priest is completing His work of final atonement. Christ is to accomplish a work unique in human history, since sin began. While no child of God will ever claim to have overcome all sin, and while it is equally true that we cannot judge any present or past individual (except Christ) that he has overcome as He overcame, that does not mean that the ministry of Christ in the Most Holy Apartment will fail to achieve such results. However much in the past or in the present we have failed to overcome, for us to say that it is impossible to overcome sin through faith in the Redeemer is actually to justify and to encourage sin, and to stand on the great enemy's side.

Our lesson says, "We are stewards of things that we do not understand fully. ... Our greatest stewardship is to live 'as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. 4:1, NKJV)." [1] Well, it's about time we grow up and "do ... understand fully" our stewardship "of the mysteries of God."

The right questions to ask are: Is the sacrifice of Christ as Lamb of God, and is His ministry as great High Priest, powerful enough to save His people from (not in) their sins? Is He truly able to save to the uttermost [completely] those who come unto God by Him? Will He be truly successful "as a refiner and purifier of silver ... [to] purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3)?

If the Lord wants to, He can create "a new thing in the earth," says

Jeremiah (31:22); and what He wants to accomplish is the preparation of a people for the second coming of Christ. When Christ comes the second time, will He find a people of whom it can honestly be said, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12)? For the first time in human history, this divine announcement is made. Such are "the mysteries of God."

To say that these saints don't really keep the commandments, but God pretends that they do, is to violate the context of the three angels' messages. Heaven declares these people to be "virgins. ... They ... follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. ... In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:4, 5). We know they are sinful by nature, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). But in order for this pronouncement to make any sense, the faith of Jesus has worked, and they must have ceased to continue sinning. They have overcome even as Christ overcame (Rev. 3:21). To try to insert this prophetic glimpse of an overcoming people into the post-Second Advent future is to violate the context completely. It is clear from Revelation 15:2 that this same group have gotten the victory before the close of human probation.

Previous generations have never been able to understand clearly the truth of Christian perfection without falling into the errors of perfectionism, for the reason that the hour for the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary had not yet struck. However, when we come to the "days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to his servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7).

Here is the special contribution that Seventh-day Adventists are to make to the completion of the great Reformation and the fulfillment of the gospel commission. There must be a joining together of the truth of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the truth of justification by faith. And it is here

that we begin to sense the real significance of the 1888 message as the Lord sent it to His people.

The 1888 message was one of glorious hope, free both from fanaticism and the errors of perfectionism. Both "messengers" (A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner), from the beginning of the 1888 era, were clear and emphatic that sinless living is possible, "the mystery of God," that God's people can overcome even as Christ overcame, and that the key to this glorious possibility lies in His people's faith in the ministry of the High Priest in the Most Holy Apartment.

The first three sentences of Waggoner's *Christ and His Righteousness* neatly summarize their concept of sinless living. They are the acorn of a truth that grew into a mighty oak: "In the first verse of the third chapter of Hebrews we have an exhortation which comprehends all the injunctions given to the Christian. It is this: 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.'

To do this as the Bible enjoins, to consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is, will transform one into a perfect Christian, for 'by beholding we become changed.'" [2]

Built securely on Luther's concept of justification by faith, Jones and Waggoner together set forth three essential elements of the uniqueness of the three angels' messages. Here is where the 1888 message goes further than the sixteenth-century Reformers were able to go in their day:

First, the believer is called to "consider the ... High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" in His work of cleansing the sanctuary in the antitypical Day of Atonement which began in 1844.

Second, to consider Christ continually and intelligently, just as He is, is to consider the true New Testament teaching that His role as Substitute and Example required Him to take the nature of fallen man, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and thus be able to succor them that are tempted.

Third, faith in such a Saviour and High Priest will transform one into a perfect Christian. Waggoner used the word transform. Not only will the true believer be counted or legally reckoned such; he will actually become a perfect Christian by faith.

We are admonished by the Apostle Paul, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. ... And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:9, 16). Certainly "a pure conscience" indicates Christian character perfection. Perfect Love is the mystery of godliness. But real Love for Christ is lacking. That's why of course real godliness in Laodicea is lacking also.

So when Ellen White heard this message she recognized in it the power and force of the gospel which would prepare God's people to stand with a pure character in the day of Christ's second coming. They would be a living testimony for God through the crisis hour. They would be part of the 144,000 who would be translated without seeing death at His return. They would be a living testament to the power of God unto salvation from sin. Living in sinful flesh, tempted, tried and afflicted, the mystery of godliness would be revealed in them--"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, p. 39.

[2] Page 7, Glad Tidings ed., 1999.

Chapter 6

The Marks of a Steward

The sovereignty of God means that He owns everything. Humans are only entrusted with what God has provided. The primary trait of stewards is they clearly understand this, and consistently act accordingly. This is a simple concept, but human pride has perverted it almost beyond recognition to most people living today. Regardless of what we think of God's sovereignty, He is sovereign and our perceptions don't change that. We can understand God at some level, but we have to turn to His word and leave our preconceived ideas about Him.

It is easy to fall into the self-centered trap that comes naturally to humans. We always want to possess, whether it be material things or intangibles such as power and influence. Striving to have anything belonging to this world brings us to the point where God's gifts now take the place of God. The mark of a good steward is that he or she never forgets that nothing can take the place of God.

"Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For ... whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" (Matt. 16:24-26, New American Standard Bible). This is where most nonbelievers err; they think they have something to offer in exchange for their souls.

What does it mean to take up our cross? Many think our cross consists of the various trials that come to us. Often, we hear parents sighing that their cross is something their child is or isn't doing. This unnecessarily causes the

child guilt, because it becomes more about the parent controlling the child's behavior. In reality, we have been told to "count it all joy" when trials come because they are God's way of refining our character. Perhaps God is trying to teach the parent that they have only been given stewardship of the child, and He will take care of His children in His way and time. Our cross is the same one that Jesus had. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19). Our cross, like that of Jesus' cross, consists of giving everything to God without reservation.

The person who has completely lost all confidence in the flesh to acquire things of this world understands what it means to be poor, as Jesus used that word. The blessed ones who possess the kingdom are they who have released everything and have come to understand they can possess nothing. They become like a common beggar, who has accepted the fact that he or she has no hope of possessing anything. What a wonderful place to be, since Jesus has promised to supply all our needs. Stewardship means you aren't expected to be the commander over that which you are the steward. Your only job is to preserve, cherish, and responsibly manage what you have been given.

This applies to the lessons God has led us to and taught us in the past. The most serious responsibility a steward can have is to be given a gospel message that is "most precious," as our church was given "through Elders Waggoner and Jones." [1] We alter, disregard, or despise that message at peril to our souls, especially those who have been given the special opportunity to study the message of righteousness given to our church in 1888. That was many years ago, yet we still hear people who misunderstand the message, and quarrel about whether we should even study it.

James asks, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is

not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ... You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:1, 4).

In our dear church, there are still many sincere folks who are conflicted about the message of righteousness by faith, and they quarrel about what it is, often without adequate study. James says the source of these quarrels and conflicts are "your pleasures that wage war in your members."

In verse 4 he tells what these "pleasures" might be. Adultery can only be committed by persons who are married. If you're not married, you can commit fornication, but not adultery. James is trying to tell believers that they have become part of the bride of Christ, and any friendship with the world is disloyal and unfaithful to her husband. A bride who doesn't cherish her relationship with her Christ-husband is committing spiritual adultery.

A quotation from last week's lesson is also appropriate for this week: "'A steward identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity because his master trusts him. If in any wise he acts selfishly and turns the advantages gained by trading with his lord's goods to his own advantage, he has perverted the trust reposed in him.'--Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 246." [2]

The people who make up the bride of Christ have all "died in Christ." Waggoner explains this: "Now we see how it is that we are dead to the law. We died in Christ, and were raised in Him. ... Now that the union with Christ has been effected, we serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. In marriage, the woman is to be subject to the husband. So when we were united to sin, we were in all things subject to sin. For a time it was

willing service; but when we saw the Lord, and were drawn to Him, the service became irksome. We tried to keep God's law, but were bound, and could not. But now we are set free. Sin no longer restrains us, and our service is freedom. We gladly render to Christ all the service that the law requires of us. We render this service because of the perfect union between us. His life is ours, since we were raised only by the power of His life. Therefore our obedience is simply His loyalty and faithfulness in us." [3]

The marks of a steward are loyalty, faithfulness, trustworthiness, and obedience; all things that are impossible without death to self and resurrection in Christ. Our Bridegroom, Jesus, has demonstrated all these traits toward His church and He will give us the same traits if we are willing to receive them.

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

- [1] Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 90.
- [2] Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, p. 37.
- [3] Ellet J. Waggoner, Waggoner on Romans, Glad Tidings ed. (1997), pp. 119, 120.

Chapter 7

Honesty With God

Is there a better word than "stewardship" in describing our relationship to Jesus in His work of proclaiming the gospel "to every creature"? The 1888 message helps us to see the joy of fellowship with Jesus in giving and serving the world.

Coming to the fore as the most significant contribution of the 1888 message is: the motivation for giving and serving Christ. Why do we keep the Sabbath, pay our tithe, work as missionaries, etc.? Because we want to be saved. We don't want to be lost; we want to go to heaven. Very good idea, but if it never goes beyond that, it is the root of legalism. All self-centered motivation is "under the law," old covenant, and it will surely fail in the final crisis. Much of our public evangelism is based on this egocentric appeal, which is good for a childish understanding.

But the Bible speaks often of a process of growing up. Ephesians 4 says we must "henceforth be no more children, ... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things." In fact, we are to come "unto a [mature person], unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (vss. 14, 15, 13).

The 1888 message points us to a new self-forgetful motivation: a concern for Jesus, that He receive His reward, that He be crowned King of kings (not that we "wear a crown in our Father's house," as the ditty goes), that we honor Him, that this burden of sorrow He feels for a world reeling in woe may be lifted, that He see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

This new motivation is created in our worldly, self-centered, sinful

hearts by the introduction of something the Bible calls agape(Rom. 5:8). This also is a fundamental idea of the 1888 message. It is a concept of love far different than human beings normally understand, or that Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in general understand. It is a concept of love consistent with the biblical idea of the non-immortality of the soul.

Those who believe in natural immortality find it impossible to grasp the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of this biblical idea of agape.

Ellen White makes clear in her own simple language that this concept of agape is today ministered solely from the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, it is a refreshingly different yea of the gospel than is possible for people to proclaim who do not understand the nature of man or the ministry of the High Priest in the second apartment since 1844. [1] It involves the proclamation of the Lamb of God and His cross in high-fidelity realism never clearly grasped by Seventh-day Adventists and by the world itself.

The important element of the 1888 message that deserves our careful study is the relationship between the final atonement work of Christ in cleansing the heavenly sanctuary and the biblical truth of justification by faith.

The biblical view of justification by faith is refreshingly different from the all-too-common view. The 1888 message sees justification by faith as experiential; that is, it is itself a change of heart. When a person is justified by faith, he is reconciled to God, and at the same time he is in fact reconciled to God's holy law. Joyfully Ellen White said that this message of justification by faith "is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." [2]

This is what made her happy to hear it, why she said she had heard

nothing like it presented publicly in the previous 45 years. Happily this is justification by faith--it does not in the least downplay sanctification. Bear in mind that she declares this to be "the third angel's message in verity." [3] This is a serious call for us to study, to learn, to comprehend. What we have often said is sanctification is in reality the experience of justification by faith.

There is a beautifully logical progression of truth in this 1888 message. It follows that this experience of justification by faith must rest on some foundation stronger than the believer's feelings or works, or even choice to believe. Ephesians 2 clearly says that we are saved "by grace, through faith" (vs. 8). Where was that grace manifested? Titus 2:11-14 says when Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us ... " it was at the cross that His grace was manifested and His blood was shed for the world.

This is why the 1888 "messengers," A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, saw that in the purely legal or objective sense, the whole world was justified at the cross. Justification by faith cannot be a personal reality without appreciating what Christ accomplished by His sacrifice. Ellen White saw this truth as an element of the light that is yet to lighten the earth with glory.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 92.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372; *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

Chapter 8

The Impact of Tithing

There's a fundamental truth that underlies all human existence: No human being anywhere can claim rightful title to even one dollar as being his or hers. This principle is taught in a well-known verse: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish" (John 3:16). Obviously, this means that "the world" was doomed to "perish" unless God gave that Gift. It's a blunt, straightforward recognition that "the world" (everyone, not just believers) owes everything to that divine Gift. No one can believe the gospel without recognizing immediately that he now relates to money and things in a new way.

Another text states the same principle even more clearly: "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). The original language implies that a new compulsion now grips the heart, stronger than the old compulsion of selfishness.

This powerful truth lays an ax at the root of our love affair with money. If we believe that Christ "died for all," that is the same as saying that we died along with him and that if He had not died for all, we would all be dead and would therefore have nothing.

This idea parallels one of the essential elements of the 1888 message--the new covenant truth, which is God's one-way promise to write His law in our hearts, and to give us everlasting salvation as a free gift "in Christ." E. J. Waggoner caught the Bible idea: "The covenant and promise of God are one

and the same. ... God's covenants with men can be nothing else than promises to them. ...

"After the Flood God made a 'covenant' with every beast of the earth, and with every fowl; but the beasts and the birds did not promise anything in return (Gen. 9:9-16). They simply received the favor at the hand of God. That is all we can do--receive. God promises us everything that we need, and more than we can ask, or think, as a gift. We give Him ourselves, that is, nothing. And He gives us Himself, that is, everything. That which makes all the trouble is that even when men are willing to recognize the Lord at all they want to make bargains with Him. They want it to be an equal, 'mutual' affair--a transaction in which they can consider themselves on par with God." [1]

God has instituted a plan of managing money that perpetually reminds us that we do not own "our" assets. In the early days of our world, even before there were any Jews, He instituted the tithing system--returning one-tenth of all we get to Him.

The idea is not that God is poor and needs a dole from us. And it's not a taxation system. To return a tenth of our income to God acknowledges that "if One died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14). It also acknowledges that we are handling Someone else's property. The tenth we return to Him says that we see ourselves as thankful stewards of life itself. Tithe is a tangible hallelujah, a lifeline that helps connect our alienated souls to reality, a reminder of our tenuous grasp on life and on all we have.

The principle of giving is the antithesis of getting. Everyone is born with the spirit of getting; no baby ever cries because another one is hungry. The "cheerful giver" whom God loves is not that way by nature. No one has any natural-born righteousness. The "cheerful giver" is a selfish person (we all are by nature) who has been renewed by a heart appreciation of the

"unspeakable gift" of God's grace in Christ. His cheerful giving is the fruit of a faith that works by love (see 2 Cor. 9:15; Gal. 5:6).

Although God so loved the whole world that he gave His Son for it, those who appreciate the Gift are stockholders in His grand enterprise of telling the world the good news. All who believe are members of His family, with a vested interest in the plan of salvation. The tithes and offerings that are acceptable to God are those that are given as freely as He gave His offering in our behalf. God has directed that they be used in His worldwide program of proclaiming the good news: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. ... Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" (Mal. 3:8-10).

The "storehouse," or God's "house," symbolizes His temple or organization on earth--the church. We don't pay tithes to God, nor give them; we return them to Him. They are His. He does not keep a cent for Himself, but uses all of it in support of His world network of agencies proclaiming the pure gospel--His church on earth.

Does God intend for even poor people to return to Him a tenth of their meager income? The answer is that everyone is invited to share in the blessing of being shareholders in God's enterprise. Never in the history of the world has anyone suffered because of returning the tithe to the Lord. He has made Himself personally responsible to fulfill an ironclad promise: "Prove Me now herewith [in tithe-paying], saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes" (Mal. 3:10, 11).

The tyranny of materialism is cruel bondage, a constant oppression of spirit. It is the pressure of keeping up with the neighbors or the relatives, excessive concern for clothes, houses, furniture, cars, vacations, anything to

bolster our sagging self-esteem. In loving concern for our happiness, the Lord pleads with us, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15, New International Version).

Could Jesus have been speaking especially to us today? Yes, most surely. Never in world history has any people had more "good things laid up" than we have. Jesus' point is that these material baubles are neither true wealth nor permanent. "The pagan world runs after all such things" (vs. 30). But God has already given us wealth infinitely better! "Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ... Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near. ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (vss. 32-34).

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnote:

[1] Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 71, CFI ed. (2016).

Chapter 9

Offering of Gratitude

From time to time, Jesus warmly commended the faith of various individuals whom He healed. But His commendation of Mary sets the crowning seal of perfection to His growing definition of faith.

He had said to the cold-hearted Simon, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (Luke 7:47). Clearly, Mary loved much because she knew she had been forgiven much.

She probably felt, however, as many since have felt, that she yet wanted faith. This simple, contrite love she knew--what good would it be if she knew not that greater virtue of faith which alone could get something done, like moving mountains? Imagine her surprise to hear Jesus assign His own definition to her experience of contrite love, as He told her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (vs. 50). She had a precious possession: genuine "faith." But what is it?

A picture is worth a thousand words. Faith is the essence of true Christian experience. Righteousness is only by faith, "not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But we must distinguish genuine faith from its counterfeit if we are ever to know peace of heart. Jesus lifts up Mary's heart-response to His delivering her from her "seven devils" as being what the Christian wants: the "picture" of faith. Mary's story makes it easy for us to understand. The picture is worth more than many thousands of words.

Faith is simply a heart-appreciation of the agape love that led the Son of

God to die for us on His cross. That faith is what Mary had.

From her first contact with the Savior, she had begun opening her heart for the Holy Spirit to "pour" in that agape. She couldn't receive much at first, but day by day her capacity began to grow.

In His first contact with her in Magdala, Jesus gave expression to that agape, perhaps not in words, but in look, in touch, in spirit, in the fervency of His prayer for her deliverance. She was almost totally gone, but a tiny remnant of soul was still within her that responded with that tiny spark of appreciation. Thereafter, with each succeeding prayer during the following six sessions, her appreciation of His agape grew.

What motivated her thereafter was not fear of hell, not hope of reward, not love of heaven, not desire for praise from others, but a totally non-egocentric appreciation for "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love [agape] of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:18,19).

She experienced the reality of the delightful process stated in Romans 5:5: "Hope does not disappoint, because the love [agape] of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (New American Standard Bible). Starting with an empty heart, the agape fills it like you fill a wine jug! And once the heart is filled, it all flows to others as easily and naturally as it flowed in from the heart of Jesus.

It's not that you try and try to behave like Jesus; "behold," see, comprehend the reality that was in His heart; sense what it cost Him to save you; then the same behavior flows out from your own heart. Like watching a game at the arena, we behold this drama unfold unconsciously in Mary. She is a demonstration of how a sinner is saved.

What is the link between the love of Christ and the faith of Mary? When she broke the alabaster flask of precious ointment to anoint Jesus, she was giving a lesson to the world. She showed that same spirit of sacrifice which Jesus' life and death exemplified. Mary's act has special meaning for us as an illustration of what led Him to His cross.

Her act at Bethany stands out alone in history as the most beautiful, hearttouching deed ever performed by a repentant sinner. It was closely involved with the outworking of the great controversy between Christ and Satan because it was welcome evidence to Jesus and to the watching universe that Satan's grand contention was wrong: humanity is indeed capable of attaining a heart-appreciation of the sacrifice Jesus made.

Mary had no righteousness of her own; but her Savior's righteousness had been imparted to her, to become now an integral element of her character. She welcomed it. It was not merely legally imputed; it had found lodging in her soul. As Job long before had proved Satan wrong when he demonstrated that someone could serve God for no reward, so now Mary makes a magnificent demonstration, but not realizing her role.

She demonstrates the power implicit in a commitment. She burns all bridges behind her; from now on she has given herself to the Savior, everything laid on the altar of Christ. Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Henceforth she has no problem with "obedience." It's not just outward acts; it's heart.

Did she help Jesus? Imagine how her noble deed cheered the heart of the Savior in His darkest hours when He hung on His cross! No angel from heaven could have brought Him the comfort which the memory of her tearful sacrifice gave Him. In her sacrificial faith directed to Him He discerned a pledge of His eventual joy. The travail of His soul will purchase for Him a precious reward--the making of many righteous through "faith

which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6; Isa. 53:11).

Christ's death on the cross satisfied the legal demands of the atonement. Fine. Theologians can wrangle over it endlessly. But the evoking of such repentant love in human hearts is what changes lives. It gives the Savior a reward for His expenditure of Himself.

Yes, "God commanded" that the "most precious [1888] message" go to the world; and Jesus said clearly that wherever the gospel is preached "throughout the whole world," Mary Magdalene's story must be included (Mark 14:9). The joy of Jesus was in proclaiming this Good News and watching people's eyes light up. That joy will be yours, too.

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 10

The Role of Stewardship

This week's lesson concentrates on two essential elements of the 1888 message--the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from all sin, and the second coming of Christ. The first must be accomplished in the hearts of God's people before the second can take place. The judicial declaration of forgiveness of sins rests solely upon Christ's work on the cross and in the heavenly sanctuary. Christ's death provided the atoning sacrifice, and His work as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary carries out the application of that sacrifice's blessing in the lives of the faithful. Therefore, the very first work in the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is the cleansing--the removal of all sin--from the hearts and minds from God's people. [1]

This is the object of the everlasting covenant (see 1 John 3:5-10). "While the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14." [2]

"Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. ... God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He set us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin." [3]

The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the second coming of Christ are the very core of the unique Seventh-day Adventist message. No other group on earth have been called to carry forward this work. It is the reason for our being in this world as God's ambassadors. The apostle Paul's declaration, "we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing

through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Cor. 5:20, Holman Christian Standard Bible [HCSB]), is the driving force of our last day message.

The first angel of Revelation 14 appointed a people to the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The everlasting covenant (gospel) calls all men, everywhere in the earth, to recognize the Creator as the one true God, who not only created all things "in the beginning," but recreates the characters of penitent sinners through the power of the faith of Jesus Christ. As soon as a person recognizes the comprehensive significance of the fact that the God of heaven is the Creator, the Sabbath comes into focus as the one day that honors God and praises Him for His work both for us and in us.

The second angel then tells us that the fundamental truth of God as Creator and the sanctity of His seventh-day Sabbath, are in direct contrast and in conflict with Babylon's message, which centers on the works of man. Recognizing the gospel truth of these two messages means that all other ideas about God and salvation fall to the ground as unsustainable denials of God's power to save from sin.

The third angel calls all humanity to heed the messages of the first and second angels, and to "come out" of those false ideas about salvation that have plagued the human race since the Fall.

The three angels' messages are, together, "the everlasting covenant" concerning the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Christ's work in the first apartment is a work of forgiveness, but His work in the most holy place is a work of the blotting out of all sin. God has a superabundance of forgiveness that continues to the close of probation for the world, but the blotting out of sin in the hearts of God's people prepares the way for the second coming of Christ. This is the distinctness of "the third angel's message in verity"--the faith and righteousness of Christ that cleanses from sin, all who will believe

the good news. [4]

Through the work of Christ in His sanctuary ministry He is preparing His people for the second coming. This preparation in our hearts involves a deepening knowledge of His character so that we become so intimately acquainted with Him that deception will be impossible during the final misrepresentation of His character to the world through the "great wonders" and blasphemy propagated by the two beasts of Revelation 13. In this preparation, Christ Himself is reflected to the world through His people who lift Him up, and thus "draw all men" to Him (John 12:32).

"The time of the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things is indeed at the very doors. And when Jesus comes, it is to take His people unto Himself. It is to present to Himself His glorious church, 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' but that is 'holy and without blemish.' It is to see Himself perfectly reflected in all His saints.

"And before He comes thus, His people must be in that condition. Before He comes we must have been brought to that state of perfection in the complete image of Jesus. Eph. 4:7, 8, 11-13. And this state of perfection, this developing in each believer the complete image of Jesus--this is the finishing of the mystery of God, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. ...

"The present time being the time when the coming of Jesus and the restitution of all things is at the very doors; and this final perfecting of the saints having necessarily to precede the coming of the Lord and the restitution of all things; we know by every evidence that now we are in the times of refreshing--the time of the latter rain. And as certainly as that is so, we are also in the time of the utter blotting out of all sins that have ever been against us." [5]

We are God's special stewards of the most unique message of Christ and

His righteousness. It is a message that is not being preached by any other entity on earth. That being the fact, we should ask ourselves: If this is God's focus; if the message that God entrusted to A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in 1888 is the message that will prepare a people to receive the outpouring of the latter rain, to fit a people to be God's final ambassadors to the world; if it is the message that will bring an end to Christ's ministry in heaven so that He can come as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16), then what business do we have employing our energies with any other message? [6]

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

- [1] See pages 119, 120, A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, Glad Tidings ed. (2003).
- [2] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.
- [3] Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.
- [4] See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.
- [5] Jones, *The Consecrated Way*, pp. 125, 126.
- [6] With current events that are challenging, confusing, and counterfeiting the proclamation of God's vital truth, see Ellen G. White statement in *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 204: "The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. ... The fundamental principles that have sustained the work ... would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. ... A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced."

Chapter 11

Debt -- A Daily Decision

Our lesson gives us excellent advice and wise counsel on borrowing and spending money, and staying out of debt. However, the 1888 message goes beyond our day-to-day interaction with money to a different kind of "debt," one that never can be repaid. Let's start with what Ellet J. Waggoner had to say:

"'I Am Debtor.'--That was the keynote of Paul's life, and it was the secret of his success. Nowadays we hear of men saying, 'The world owes me a living.' But Paul considered that he owed himself to the world. And yet he received nothing from the world but stripes and abuse. Even that which he had received before Christ found him was a total loss. But Christ had found him, and given Himself to him, so that he could say, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2:20).

"As Christ's life was his life, and Christ gave Himself for the world, Paul necessarily became a debtor to the whole world. This has been the case of every man who has been a servant of the Lord. ... 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matt. 20:26-28)." [1]

Whether or not you believe the gospel, the fact is that Christ died in your place when He died for "all" ("for the world"). Therefore, if He had not died for us, you would now at this moment be dead and in your grave. When Paul

realized that, he took a deep breath. "I don't belong to myself! I don't possess anything that is mine by right--even my physical life I owe to Christ who died for me. My money, my house, my land, my education, my time, my strength--not one of these things I have called "mine" is really mine at all. I am infinitely and eternally in debt, a debt imposed by the grace of Christ."

Paul continues and explains to us how this mighty motivation works in our hearts: "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). In the original language the idea is clear that those who understand and believe this great truth of grace will "henceforth" find it impossible to live self-centered lives. No more gritting your teeth and clenching your fists and trying to force yourself to work hard for the Lord; it is automatic. An appreciation of the love of Christ has transformed you into a slave forever, a slave "under grace," Christ's freeman.

The key word there, and of course throughout the Bible, is "love." You cannot truly live under grace unless you appreciate that love revealed at the cross. When the sinner sees that cross, and appreciates that kind of love poured out, all for him, the tears come in his eyes. His heart is melted.

But must the one who truly believes in Jesus live under the tension of feeling unworthy, "the chief of sinners," sensing a constant conviction of being in debt? Is this the proper way for a Christian to feel? If Jesus were living here, would He feel like He had a daily debt to pay, an obligation to live for others and not for Himself? What can we know for sure?

(1) He invites us to "come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ... My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt.11:28-30).

(2) "The Savior of the world" has redeemed you, saved you, pulled you

out of the mire, died the second death that would have been yours; adopted you into the Father's family. Ephesians 1:3-12 details in precision all the riches of His grace that He has already given you in the gift of Himself. Even the bread you have eaten today is the purchase of His cross, for you. Infinite wealth has been lavished upon you; and you are to know, to realize, to revel in your new status as a prince or princess "in heavenly places in Christ."

(3) But genuine faith has a built-in defense against a terrible spiritual arrogance that is so bad that it actually drives people away from Christ. Most pathetic of all delusions is the vain self-confidence that can assume you are specially honored by Heaven when in fact Jesus may be deeply ashamed of you, and abhors your unlikeness to His character.

(4) The built-in defense against this tragedy? The heart-awareness of what it cost the Son of God to save you. In the midst of your rejoicing in your salvation you forever sense that it is all a gift undeserved. It becomes a joy to remember that you are eternally, infinitely in debt.

As the innocent and divine Son of God, Christ became one of us. He entered the corporate stream of our fallen humanity so that He could take the load of guilt upon Himself, and pay our debt of death. By His perfect life He satisfied the demands of the law, and His death is accounted as our death because He became one of us.

The reason Paul can say, "I have been crucified with Christ," and "If one died for all, then all died" (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:14) is because the Bible sees this corporate union of Himself with us as very real. This does not mean that we paid the debt for our sins, but that we are identified with Christ as He paid the debt. Our huge balance on the books of heaven is stamped "Paid!" As we consent to be united with Christ by faith, His death on the cross becomes our death and His righteousness becomes ours.

When the Father gave His Son, Christ also gave Himself. The price that Jesus paid was not merely a brief time spent as a visiting diplomat to this earth after which He returned to His former home; rather He gave Himself to be one of us, with us, forever. He will always retain His humanity. The price He paid was not a few days or hours of physical or spiritual agony to be endured with the prospect in view of relief and restoration; He actually went to hell in order to save us. He consented to die the equivalent of the "second death" which means, as one author puts it, "goodbye to life forever." He had to "taste death for everyone," so that we might not have to taste its bitterness (Heb. 2:9).

It's time to realize how infinitely in debt we are to a Savior who has saved us from what is in ourselves. Think it through, and you'll be singing the Hallelujah Chorus.

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] Ellet J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans*, pp. 18, 19

Chapter 12

The Habits of a Steward

Here is a thought suggested by our Adult Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, from the 1888 perspective. We've often heard it said that although Christ gets us started, we must keep on flying on our own, keeping up our speed or we will crash. I must "read the Bible, pray, and witness," in order to retain salvation. These are the very things I find difficult to do.

It is good to read the Bible, pray, and witness, but doing these things as works is not the way to retain salvation. If it is true that God takes the initiative in our salvation, it is equally true that He maintains the initiative. In other words, once you begin the Christian life, the Lord does not back off like a car salesman when you have bought your car, leaving you to struggle thereafter on your own. Struggling on our own discourages us and hardens the heart.

The Good Shepherd still takes the initiative in looking for His lost sheep. He still keeps knocking at the door of the heart. "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Never are we to think that our divine Friend becomes indifferent toward us.

How did Jesus in His humanity maintain His closeness to His Father? He was human, He had only 24 hours a day as we have, He was busy as we are, and He needed sleep as we do. He gives us a surprising insight into His devotional life: the Father maintained the initiative. Speaking of His prayerand- Bible-study life, Jesus said in the prophecy, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

His Father wakened Him morning by morning that He might listen and learn. The Lord promises nourishing food to all who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). Since there is only one kind of righteousness (by faith), what the Lord means is that a lifelong hunger for more and more righteousness by faith is happiness. You are hungry to learn more and more, never satisfied with what you learned yesterday any more than you are satisfied with the food you ate yesterday.

We don't eat our daily food because the Bible tells us to; we eat because we are hungry. The Bible reveals a loving heavenly Father and Saviour and Holy Spirit eager to maintain connection with us. He continually invites us to come to "breakfast," but of course if we are not hungry, we won't go.

This is what the Lord gives to those who hear and believe the good news. They want more, just as when you taste something delicious, you want more. They don't have to set their alarm clocks to wake up in time, or force themselves to read and pray as a "work."

It is easy for us to turn a devotional life into a works program. Note how Jesus responded to His Father's daily initiative to awaken Him "morning by morning" to "learn": "The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away" (Isa. 50:5).

How often we have been "rebellious" and turned away from His knocking at our door in the mornings! Sometimes it's because we have stayed up to watch the late show on TV, depriving ourselves of proper rest and making ourselves deaf to His appeals. (There is a reason why Scripture says that the day begins at sunset!)

To awaken in our souls that hunger and thirst is the purpose of the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness.

The gospel is the bread of life; and once you taste it, you will ever after want to "eat" without being forced to do so. What joy! Always to be hungry and thirsty for more. The world's amusements all lose their appeal when you "taste" the gospel for what it is. Many are now testifying that that hunger has been aroused in their souls by hearing or reading the 1888 message truths.

Suppose you keep trying but don't get that "hunger"?

This is not to say there is never a time for force-feeding. A sick person must temporarily be fed intravenously. But that is not the healthy way to live. And we never find health by taking pills and capsules instead of wholesome food. Five or ten minutes of hurriedly forced Bible study and a casual prayer are not adequate spiritual nourishment.

If you get sick with the flu, don't you take a day off from school or work to stay in bed and recuperate? Why not take a day off for fasting and prayer?

Not seeking the Lord as though He were trying to hide from you, but taking the time to listen to Him as He seeks you.

There are times when a wise doctor keeps a patient in a coma on intravenous feeding; but normally a healthy person eats because he's hungry, not because of stern cold duty. Your problem may not be that your 24-hour day is too short (that would be God's fault). Probably good sincere people have pounded into you a wrong idea of God.

God is not waiting for you to maintain a relationship with Him; He wants you to know He is maintaining a relationship with you. It all begins with His initiative, not yours. He wants you saved more than you want to be.

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 13

The Result of Stewardship

To endure poverty that is thrust upon you unwanted is one thing; you grumble at your lot and wish you had more money. But to be content with poverty, actually to enjoy its discipline and privation, is another. And that immediately makes us think of Jesus--a hard-working peasant who in later life said He had not where to lay His head. And He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit ..." meaning, they are the truly happy people.

Wealthy people are seldom happy people. It's not poetic fancy but hard truth that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). There are people in the world who have very little of this world's goods; they barely have the "food and raiment" wherewith to be "content," but they have the sunshine of happiness in their homes, something which the richest people in the world don't have.

There's a beautiful hymn by Anna Waring that was in the old hymnal, but it's been left out of the current church hymnal, probably because its sentiment goes too much against the grain of modern American philosophy. She says:

"I have a heritage of joy,
That yet I must not see;
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.

"There is a certainty of love
That sets my heart at rest;
A calm assurance for today,

That to be poor is best."

Wow! Of course! Such an idea must never be promoted among the richest on earth! But it's Bible teaching. No, not that abject, grinding, painful poverty is good--of course not; let's be reasonable. "Food and raiment" are necessary; and the One who had not where to lay His head doesn't want you be like that--He wants you to have a roof over your head, yes, that doesn't leak, and a bed to sleep in. And He wants you to have the necessities of life which today probably mean a car and a refrigerator. Many folks in the world don't have those things. But the principle is the thing: "a person's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he/she possesseth" (Luke 12:15). "More abundant life" the good news is not that Jesus merely offers it to you; He gives it to you. Receive it! Don't resent it!

In olden times men relied on their horses. Alexander the Great had a famous horse named Bucephalis, which he trusted. But David's Psalm 33 proclaimed that "no one can rely on his horse to save him, nor for all its power can it be a means of escape" (vs. 17, The Revised English Bible). Bucephalis was not the source of Alexander's military success!

To translate this into modern language, it means that you and I dare not trust the stock market or international economics as our salvation from hunger. Even the best business savvy is "the wisdom of this world; and that is foolishness with God": "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. ... The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (1 Cor. 3:18-20). This is not to despise sound business wisdom, but the Lord long ago told the prophet Jeremiah the truth that we all need to grasp:

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the

LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Our loving heavenly Father has not promised us the wealth of this world, but He has promised to care for us if we will remember reality: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? ... He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; ... that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; ... bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isa. 33:14-16).

That may not be a fancy, gourmet fare; but someday we shall be profoundly thankful for it. It makes the Lord happy when He can see that we appreciate what He provides us. If it's whole grain bread and vitamin rich vegetables and fruits, we shall be more healthy. Wesley said that "cleanliness is next to godliness." If he were with us today he would add that eating whole grain foods is "next to healthful living."

Happiness is trusting the Lord and appreciating all that He does for us!

There is an 1888 message lesson in grateful living we want to learn now: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. ... And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 14

The Cosmic Controversy

There have been no new worlds or planets created in the universe since God finished His work of creation. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them," says Genesis 2:1. What has kept God busy since then? The answer: a work of reconciling heaven and earth, because "there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12:7).

When we study about "the cosmic controversy," we don't find much good news there, but we are also studying about the "The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin" (Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 7), and that is good news.

The very first page of the New Testament declares that Jesus came to "save His people from their sins" (not in them; Matt. 1:21). God cannot eradicate sin from His universe until first He eradicates it from human hearts. That is where sin has taken root; the human heart is the last lair where the dragon of sin lurks. Sin's roots go down to our toes. Can sin be overcome, eradicated? The outcome of the great controversy between Christ and Satan depends on the answer.

Some say that sin itself will never be conquered until Christ comes the second time, zaps His saints and gives them holy flesh, removing temptation from them, the implication being that as long as you and I have our "sinful flesh," sin will still win out.

But the Bible is clear: even though we still have sinful flesh or sinful

nature, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:13, 14). "Grace did much more abound" than "sin abounded" (Rom. 5:20). In other words, the idea is clear: grace is stronger than sin. If that is not true, the great controversy must end in defeat for God.

This grace of God operates through the revelation of the love of God (agape) (2 Cor 5:14, 15). Therefore, "the agape of Christ constraineth us ... henceforth" to live not unto self, but "unto Him" who died for us and rose again. The love of self is the very essence of sin, its quintessential element that filled Lucifer's heart in the beginning and which here at the every end of time forces the "church of the Laodiceans" to be lukewarm in heart.

Christ conquered the problem of sin by His sinless life and His sacrifice on the cross (John 12:31-33). In order for the great controversy to come to an end, He must have a people whose faith demonstrates that such agape will "constrain" them also to overcome "even as [He] overcame" (Rev. 3:21).

The bright picture at the end of the Bible is Heaven's spotlight on a group who stand on "a sea of glass mingled with fire" who have "gotten the victory" over sin, "having the harps of God." That wasn't accomplished by zapping them with sinless flesh, but by giving them grace to "overcome" in sinful flesh.

The great controversy has involved the universe as well as this fallen planet. Revelation 12:12 says that because of the victory won in this reconciliation, "Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." Finally, it will be said: "The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation" (The Great Controversy, p. 678).

This blessed harmony will be the result of God's work on His cosmic

Day of Atonement, which means simply, His Day of Reconciliation, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the ending of alienation.

Is your human heart reconciled to God? Are you alert to realize that your natural human heart "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7), except through the atonement of Christ? Do you still wrestle with a lingering sense that somehow you must make yourself good before He can be reconciled to you, and before He can really accept you and respect you? Do you have that nagging feeling that He cannot truly be your Friend until you are worthy? While you are sitting in the pigsty, do you wish you had a Father who would forgive and accept the prodigal?

If so, you need to know about the Day of Atonement; as never before in world history the world's attention is directed now to the atoning sacrifice of Christ where "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ... We ... beseech you ... in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"! (2 Cor. 5:19, 20). But you can't "be" unless you first believe He is reconciled to you! So, "spend a thoughtful hour each day" contemplating the cross where that reconciliation was accomplished (The Desire of Ages, p. 83).

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 15

Daniel and the End Time

Our quarterly provides interesting lesson studies on the first chapters of the book of Daniel, but "hidden" in the Discussion Questions at the very end of this week's study is something that is possibly one of the most misunderstood concepts of the 1888 message--"corporate guilt" as exhibited in Daniel's prayer in chapter 9, and the resultant "corporate repentance."

"Burdened in behalf of Israel, Daniel studied anew the prophecies of Jeremiah. They were very plain--so plain that he understood by these testimonies recorded in books 'the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem' (Dan. 9:2).

With faith founded on the sure word of prophecy, Daniel pleaded with the Lord for the speedy fulfillment of these promises. He pleaded for the honor of God to be preserved. In his petition he identified himself fully with those who had fallen short of the divine purpose, confessing their sins as his own. [1]

"What a prayer was that which came forth from the lips of Daniel! What humbling of soul it reveals! ... Heaven responded to that prayer by sending its messenger to Daniel. In this our day, prayers offered in like manner will prevail with God. 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' [James 5:16]. ...

"Have not we as great need to call upon God as had Daniel? I address those who believe that we are living in the very last period of this earth's history. I entreat you to take upon your own souls a burden for our churches,

our schools, and our institutions. That God who heard Daniel's prayer will hear ours when we come to Him in contrition. Our necessities are as urgent, our difficulties are as great, and we need to have the same intensity of purpose, and in faith roll our burden upon the great Burden-bearer. There is need for hearts to be as deeply moved in our time as in the time when Daniel prayed. [2]

The word "corporate" has nothing to do with legal organization, boards, or committees. It is strictly a biblical idea having its source in Paul's brilliant chapter on the church and its members being united with Christ. The church is "the body of Christ," "not one member, but many." "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."

There is no English word to describe this; hence we use a Latin derivative, corporate, which comes from corpus, "body." It is impossible to appreciate what mature union with Christ or reconciliation with Him means without grasping Paul's idea. "All the members ... being many, are one body" means they bear a corporate relationship to one another. "We [are] all baptized into one body" describes the corporate unity of the church (1 Cor. 12:12-14)

But there is more than unity: "The foot, ... the ear, ... the eye, ... God [hath] set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him." Here is corporate diversity. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, 'I have no need of thee.'" Here is corporate need. No one member can despise another.

God has built something else into the body: "God [composed] the body, having given more abundant honor to that which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body." Here is corporate balance. The purpose? "That the members should have the same care one for another" as the parts of a human

body have a corporate concern. If "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." Here is corporate pain. If "one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." Here is corporate joy (vss. 15-26).

The idea of the human race being a corporate whole "in Adam" was deeply imbedded in Hebrew thinking (1 Cor. 15:22). Daniel asks forgiveness for the sins of "our fathers," saying, "We [have not] obeyed the voice of the Lord our God," although he himself was obedient (Dan. 9:8-11). Jesus charged the murder of Zacharias on the Jewish leaders of His day, although the act occurred about 800 years earlier (Matt. 23:35; 2 Chron. 24:20). All this illustrates corporate identity and corporate guilt.

This means that the sin that another human has committed, I could commit if Christ had not saved me from it. The righteousness of Christ cannot be a mere adjunct to my own good works, a slight push to get me over the top. Our righteousness is all of Him, or it is nothing.

This was the stumbling block in 1888 and still offends many today. Apart from the grace of a Savior, the sins of the whole world would be mine if I had the "opportunity" to be in the shoes of other people, to be tempted as they in their circumstances.

This idea is impressively stated by Ellen White: "God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity." [3] Do those "computer records" show sins that do not in fact exist deep. Those sins "that would have been committed had there been opportunity," which we have not repented of, represent our unrealized guilt. Other people have committed them and we have been thankful that we have not been pressured sufficiently by temptation to do them ourselves. It follows that corporate repentance is repenting of sins that we would have committed had we had the opportunity. This goes rather deep.

Wesley said of a drunk in the gutter, "There but for the grace of Christ am I." When the church learns to appreciate such contrition, Christ's love will course through its veins and transform it into a truly "caring church," the most effective soul-winning "body" history has ever known (Zech. 8:20-23). [4]

Ellen White discerned truth. The great gospel commission could have been completed before the horrors of World Wars I and II were unleashed on the world. [5] The reason is that the 1888 message was the "beginning" of the latter rain and the loud cry; she says it was "to a large degree" rejected by the leadership of the church. Thus those who fervently believed in the doctrine of the second advent actually delayed it for generations. The sorrow of what "might have been" filled Ellen White's soul with anguish. [6]

If we were to have another 1888 session where the Holy Spirit manifested Himself as the latter rain, would we again insult Him? Unless there is repentance for doing it the first time, the answer has to be yes. We must repeat the mistakes of our brethren of the past so long as we do not welcome a corporate repentance that cleanses us from every similar "purpose" or "motive," however deep.

Is such a repentance possible? Will God ever have a people who have so learned contrition that they feel that all the sins of the human race could be theirs but for the grace of a Savior, and who thus stand before the throne "cleansed"? Will He have a people who recognize their 100 percent need of the imputed righteousness of Christ, who fully realize what they would be without it?

Some sadly say no; ancient Israel failed and so must modern Israel. But the bottom line of Bible prophecy says: "Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14). Zechariah foretells an experience of corporate and

denominational repentance, followed by a glorious experience of cleansing (Zech. 12:7-14; 13:1). Such an experience permeating the church is denominational repentance. Christ calls for it in His message to Laodicea. Isn't it time for us to respond?

As part of the human race, we share the corporate guilt of the murder of the Son of God, but are not held accountable or "condemned" unless we refuse the gift of repentance (see John 3:16-19). [7], As Seventh-day Adventists we also share the corporate guilt of our forebears' rejection of the beginning of the latter rain and the loud cry, but we will not be condemned for that sin if we accept the gift of repentance. For a long time, the Lord Jesus has been pleading with us to respond.

Is it time to do so? A world in darkness and the great universe beyond await our decision.

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes (Ellen G. White):

[1] Prophets and Kings, pp. 554, 555 (emphasis added).

[2] "The Prayer That God Accepts," Review and Herald, Feb. 9, 1897.

[3] SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1085.

[4] See also The Great Controversy, pp. 611, 612.

[5] See also Counsels for the Church, p. 29; General Conference Daily Bulletin, Feb. 28, 1893, pp. 419-421; Evangelism, p. 696.

[6] Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, pp. 104-106; Review and Herald, Dec. 15, 1904.

[7] See also Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 38.

Chapter 16

Jesus and the Book of Revelation

It is unfortunate that many people have been taught to fear the Book of Revelation, thinking that it is a study only for the most advanced Bible students and theologians. To hold such an idea is to overlook the opening line of the Book--"the Revelation of Jesus Christ." The message contained in the last book of the Bible is the "testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2). It is His own personal account about Himself that He gave to the Apostle John, who in turn wrote what was revealed to him so the whole world may know the marvelous story of Christ's intercession for the human race. All who read it and understand its message receive a blessing. Revelation is meant for us living at the end of our world's history because "the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3).

In the Book of Revelation, Christ is revealed to us through the imagery of the heavenly sanctuary. In the opening scene He is walking in the first apartment among golden candlesticks, enrobed with the garments of the high priest. In this capacity, Christ sends His message of judgment against the church down through the ages, giving counsel and admonition that was intended to guide and encourage those who heeded the message of the "Faithful and True Witness," who has revealed the end to us from the beginning (chapters 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9).

In chapters 4 and 5, Christ is portrayed as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), being presented before the throne of God as the atoning sacrifice for lost humanity (Rev. 5:11-13). His high priestly work on the day of atonement is found in Revelation chapter 14 beginning with the three angels' messages that call the world to forsake the apostasy of spiritual Babylon and worship the Creator by keeping His

Commandments through the power of Jesus' own faith. When the truth of Christ and His righteousness is believed with all the heart, the heavenly sanctuary will be cleansed through the work of Christ's Spirit, transforming the lives of all who believe in the power God to destroy sin.

As Christ closes His ministry, the most holy place will be opened in heaven, and there will be "seen in His Temple the ark of His testament" that contains His eternal Law, vindicating the Sabbath of the fourth Commandment (Rev. 11:19). All the world will be without excuse as the mighty fourth angel makes one final plea as Christ closes His most holy apartment ministry, saying, "Babylon is fallen! Come out of her My people and be not partakers of her sins" (Rev. 18:1-4).

But the enraged wicked repent not of "their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (Rev. 9:21). Realizing they are eternally lost, they flee from "the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:16, 17). From beginning to end, the Book of Revelation is about Jesus Christ our Righteousness.

The message sent from heaven to the church through A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in 1888 is also a revelation of Jesus Christ and His closing intercession for the human race. At the time God gave His "most precious message" to His "delegated messengers" [1], the world was on the brink of the final fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The Stone of Daniel chapter 2 verses 35 and 45 was about to "smash in pieces" the world that was fast filling its cup of iniquity. Michael was prepared to stand up in defense of His faithful remnant (Dan. 12:1). The four angels holding the "winds of strife" anticipated the command to release their restraining hands (Rev. 7:1, 2), that the final events of chapter 16 could rush upon the world drunken with its wickedness.

The anticipated "Sunday law" that would fulfill Revelation 13:11-17 was moving through the United States Congress as the "Blair Bill," authored by Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire. Senator Blair's purpose for the bill was to assert the right of the state to "protect the people" so they could carry out their duty to God. His law was written to assure the preservation of the "Lord's Day" for "the benefit of the people." The intended effect was to "enhance the 'Sabbath' " by instituting a civil law to restrain Sunday activities carried out by people who did not recognize their duty to God, and who thus had a corrupting influence on society.

Yes, in 1888 the "toes" of Daniel's metal man statue were hanging over the edge of eternity. All heaven was on alert for the imminent return of Christ to this earth to rescue His people from the final crisis, and whisk them away to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Heaven's angels were ready to sing the anthem, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).

There was only one problem: Christ's bride was not ready. She had not that robe of righteousness that is necessary for admission to the marriage supper (see Matt. 22:1-14). Therefore, Christ issued His appeal: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18).

The Quarterly points us to 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. These verses are "for our admonition"--they are a warning to us that we not repeat the sins of the ancient Israelites in doubting and rejecting God's leading as He works to purify to Himself a people fit to enter the Promised Land. The message God sent to prepare His church in 1888 was to purify a people and fit them for translation and admission to the marriage supper. "The truth is to elevate, to

cleanse, to purify, to sanctify, to fit us for translation, prepare us for the company of holy angels, sinless beings in the kingdom of God." [2] However, that message of truth was disputed, maligned, and rejected.

"The reception given to God's servants in past ages is the same as the reception that those today receive through whom God is sending precious rays of light. The leaders of the people today pursue the same course of action that the Jews pursued. They criticize and ply question after question, and refuse to admit evidence, treating the light sent to them in the very same way that the Jews treated the light Christ brought to them." [3]

"In rejecting the message given at Minneapolis, men committed sin. They have committed far greater sin by retaining for years the same hatred against God's messengers, by rejecting the truth that the Holy Spirit has been urging home. By making light of the message given, they are making light of the word of God. Every appeal rejected, every entreaty unheeded, furthers the work of heart-hardening, and places them in the seat of the scornful." [4]

"I would speak in warning to those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition. How long will you hate and despise the messengers of God's righteousness? God has given them His message. They bear the word of the Lord. ... But there are those who despised the men and the message they bore. They have taunted them with being fanatics, extremists, and enthusiasts. Let me prophesy unto you: Unless you speedily humble your hearts before God, and confess your sins, which are many, you will, when it is too late, see that you have been fighting against God." ... "I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ, and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice

for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."
[5]

Is there any Good News? Yes!--"His wife hath made herself ready!" (Rev. 19:7) is a promise that the marriage will not forever be delayed. Corporate solidarity between Christ (our divine Husband) and the "wife" (God's remnant church) that leads to the consummation of the marriage, can only develop as a result of true, heart-wrenching corporate repentance.*

Moses speaking for the Lord, prophesied, "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers ... then will I [God] remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember" (Lev. 26:40, 42). The final fulfillment of the everlasting covenant is contingent upon corporate repentance. When we understand this it will bring forth in our lives a total transformation of our attitude toward salvation, justification, and righteousness by faith. Then Christ's longed-for "at-one-ment"--that corporate solidarity that forever binds our willing hearts to God--will be accomplished. [6]

Finally, the angel can exit the Temple in heaven and cry with a loud voice to Him that is upon the cloud, "Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: ... for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Rev. 14:15). The "Faithful and True Witness," no longer our high priest but clothed in kingly garments and mounted on a white horse, will "make war" against all the wicked of the earth, coming down from heaven as the "KING of kings, and LORD of lords" at the head of God's avenging army. "For He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication," and [He will avenge] "the blood of His servants at her hand" (Rev. 19:11-16, 2).

The Book of Revelation is Christ from beginning to end: Christ counseling, pleading, guiding, calling, warning, judging, and all the while

revealing to us His work as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary as He is bringing this world's history to its conclusion.

Let all God's people shout, Alleluia and Amen!

--Ann Walper

Endnotes (Ellen G. White):

- [1] See Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 91, 92, 96, and 97.
- [2] Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, no. 324, p. 291.
- [3] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 911; article read at the 1890 General Conference Session held at Battle Creek.
- [4] Ibid., pp. 913, 914.
- [5] Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 96, 97.
- [6] See The Desire of Ages, p. 668.

* Corporate repentance is the recognition that had we been at the foot of the cross with the rejecting Jews, and had we been at Minneapolis in 1888 with the mocking leadership of the church, we would have done exactly the same things as took place there in killing and rejecting our Savior. We are just as sinful and guilty in our hearts, and are in need of a deep, soul-searching repentance. This is the essence of Christ's call to the Laodicean church found in Revelation 3:14-22.

Chapter 17

Salvation and the End Time

This week's lesson opens with an interesting concept: "One fascinating but crucial difference between Christianity and non-Christian religions is that while the others emphasize what their founders have taught them, they do not emphasize what their founders have done for them. And that's because whatever their founders may have done for them, it cannot save them. All these leaders can do is try to teach the people how to 'save' themselves" (Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, p. 30).

Most Christians know that Christ was born as a baby on earth, died on a cross, was resurrected, and went back to heaven. Unfortunately, most are confused about why He did all that, if it can apply to them, how they can earn it. Essentially, even though people may know things Christ did, if that's all they understand they still think they need to save themselves. Understanding the love of God is the key to comprehending that the things that Christ accomplished are unconditional. There is nothing we can do to be good enough to earn it. The message given to our church in 1888 teaches that salvation is based completely on what Christ has done and is full and complete. As the second Adam (see Romans 5), Christ literally saved the world when He died our second death. Many stumble at this concept because they think it means all will be saved. Although God predestined all mankind to be saved when He placed us in Christ at the incarnation, He will not force us to accept His deliverance from death caused by sin.

E. J. Waggoner caught the idea: "All this deliverance is 'according to the will of our God and Father.' The will of God is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). He wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). And He 'accomplishes all things according to the

counsel of His will' (Eph. 1:11)." [1]

Notice that "'He,' God, will accomplish all things and His will is that all will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. So many people have trouble believing what these verses say.

"'Do you mean to teach universal salvation?' someone may ask. We mean to teach just what the Word of God teaches--that 'the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men' (Titus 2:11, R.V.). God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given to it to him; but the majority spurn it and throw it away. The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to every man and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession." [2]

A common way people "spurn" the salvation Christ accomplished on His cross is that they refuse to believe that the good news is really that good. People have heard the phrase "righteousness by faith" and think they know what it means, but they look at their lives and worry that they don't meet the standards of a good Christian life. They can't believe there is nothing they have to do, even if it's just to maintain a "relationship" with God. Once we set up any conditions to earn God's favor, we have inserted human effort into the concept of salvation. Christianity has been plagued with people who make rules to assure that church members are in "good standing" with God. Making and keeping rules will never find favor with God, nor will it obligate Him to take you to heaven.

A. T. Jones explained this at the 1895 General Conference Session: "Here is a passage in 'Gospel Workers,' page 319, which I will read. It is concerning Christ. 'There is not a monastic order upon the earth from which He [Christ] would not have been excluded for overstepping the prescribed rules.' Exactly. You cannot bind the life of God by rules, and of all things you cannot bind it by man-made rules. He wants us therefore to be so

imbued with the life of Jesus Christ itself, and the life of Christ Himself, that the living life of Jesus Christ and the principles of the truth of God shall shine and work in the life, in order that the life of Christ shall still be manifest in human flesh. That is where God has brought us in Him. And we are brought to this place in Him by being by faith ourselves crucified with Him, and dead with Him, and buried with Him, and made alive with Him, and waked up with Him, and raised up with Him, and seated with Him, in the heavenly existence where he sits at the right hand of God in glory." [3]

Our lesson emphasizes that the key to assurance of salvation must always be based on an appreciation of the love of God, not by looking at our performance. Nothing demonstrates the love of God more than the cross. Ellen White described that true obedience begins with a heart change, not rule-keeping:

"All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us." [4]

Notice that it is through an appreciation of the character of Christ that our wills are refined and sanctified, not making or keeping rules that produce genuine obedience. Then, the refined and sanctified will naturally respond with genuine obedience.

It is the refining and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that perfects our characters and makes genuine obedience possible. Any attempt to earn salvation by rule keeping dishonors God. A response by the human heart

must occur to the Holy Spirit's work.

"Of the Spirit Jesus said, 'He shall glorify Me.' The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people." [5]

"Do we have the problem today? Can we represent Christ as safely standing on deck throwing a life preserver out to the drowning sinner? If he grabs the rope, he is taking the initiative in his own salvation, and Paul says that 'frustrates the grace of God'! No, the Bible represents Jesus as out there in the water with the sinking sinner, a Life Guard actually saving him 100 percent. And if the drowning sinner doesn't beat Him off, Jesus will get him safely on deck. Salvation is totally of grace, 'not of works [even 1 percent!] lest any man should boast' (Eph. 2:8, 9).

"And don't be afraid of too much 'more abounding grace.' It's real. There is no true obedience to the law except 'by grace through faith' (see Rom. 5:20; Gal. 5:6)." [6]

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 13; CFI ed. (2016).

[2] *Ibid*, pp. 13, 14.

[3] A. T. Jones, 1895 General Conference Bulletin, "The Third Angel's Message--No. 26," p. 494.

[4] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 671.

[6] Robert J. Wieland, *Dial Daily Bread*, 2003.

Chapter 18

Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary

What is the truth of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary? How shall we present Him "standing toward the sinner"?

There are serious arguments that can be presented in support of the fear motivation to give up sin. Fear is not completely or necessarily negative. A perfectly healthy person with no hang-ups will look both ways before crossing a busy street. It's common sense. Nor can it be denied that throughout the millenniums of years of human history God's inspired servants have often employed fear as their motivation tool for inducing sinners to respond. The Old Testament prophets frequently speak of God destroying nations and people. There is no question that God sent the Flood to destroy sinners, also the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah, and destroyed the Egyptians at the Red Sea crossing.

The question that is of concern in the 1888 message is, What appeal will God use in that final "lighting of the earth with glory"? A "voice" will sound from heaven with unprecedented power, "Come out of [Babylon], My people." Will the motivation be associated with a uniquely clear revelation of the cross, what the Son of God accomplished there, and what it cost Him to save the world? Or will it be the quintessential appeal of fear inspired by the most terrorism-sounding message of all time? "The third angel's message in verity" [1] appears on the surface to be the latter.

In seeking a "balance" between what appear to be contradictory views, we can ask, Does the cleansing of the sanctuary ministry of our High Priest include a clearer concept of the atonement than God's people as a body have perceived in the past? If so, will it result in a more complete reconciliation

with God than has ever in the past been experienced by God's people as a body? And again, if so, will it be a clearer revelation of the agape of Christ? It must be true that nothing less can achieve such an unprecedented reconciliation!

Admittedly, this question reopens a contention that has boiled for half a century--was the 1888 message genuinely new light, or was it a mere re-emphasis of 16th century Reformationist and current Evangelical ideas? The 1888 message was far in advance of the Protestant Reformation message. The 1888 message idea of justification by faith is one that is parallel to and consistent with that unique truth of Christ our High Priest cleansing His people and the heavenly sanctuary.

Correctly understood the 1888 message presents an appeal to the heart with a motivation imposed by agape. The reason must be that the cleansing of the sanctuary accomplishes a "final atonement," seen as an ultimate heart experience of reconciliation with God.

Wherein is the message "be ye reconciled to God" associated with comprehending the cross? The context of 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 can help.

"The love [agape] of Christ [is what] constraineth us," that is, motivates us (Peterson in *The Message*, renders it, "moved me to such extremes"). But in this final day of atonement, it's not just an "extremist" apostle Paul so moved, but a corporate "body" of believers. Never before has this happened to such a "body."

Why this development? The church matures, to think and to appreciate that "love," more deeply. Because of clearer light, more cogent, meaningful concepts, "we" conclude from reasonable evidence--"we thus judge."

"Judge" what? The answer: how "One died for all." The equation probes

why He died, and what He accomplished thereby. The cross has to become the focus of "the third angel's message in verity."

What does the resulting motivation accomplish? It accomplishes an unprecedented degree of consecration sensed by "all saints." "Those who live" can no longer "live unto themselves," which is the only solution to the problem of Laodicea's corporate lukewarmness. This would seem to be the motivation that "constrains" that corporate body of believers to "follow the Lamb (the crucified Christ) whithersoever He goeth." It is a new level development in Christian history deemed worthy of special mention in Revelation, where all references to the church are couched in corporate terms.

The context indicates that "be ye reconciled to God" experience depends on a clear comprehension of how "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," how He took upon Himself "their trespasses." The last rays of light to shine upon this dark world, we are told, will therefore be "a revelation of God's character of love." Here is objective truth, not merely subjective emotion.

So the issue is evangelistic, not complex theology. What message can reconcile the alienated, world-loving, self-centered, "lukewarm" heart to God? Unless a clearer understanding of the gospel becomes involved, the result must inevitably be further lukewarmness of devotion perpetuated generation after generation for centuries more.

The present-day cleansing truth pleads with the sinner "in Christ's stead." That is, as soul-winners we are to enable the sinner to identify with Christ so fully that he experiences a first-hand encounter with Him as vivid as did the Samaritan woman at her well or Nicodemus in his night interview. This is soul-winning and soul-holding evangelism. Nothing else grips bored, world-loving Adventist youth.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnote:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.

Chapter 19

The Change of the Law

On most calendars that are used worldwide, the seventh day is called Saturday. To make it doubly sure, we can check by reading Luke 23:54, which tells of the crucifixion of Jesus: "That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near." Millions observe Good Friday in honor of the death of Jesus; that pinpoints the true Sabbath, for the next day of the week is the regular weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

And again we can pinpoint the true Sabbath day by reading the next verses in Luke: "The women who had come with Him ... observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (vss. 55, 56). The next verses tell of His resurrection on Sunday: "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they ... came to the tomb ... But they found the stone rolled away" (Luke 24:1, 2). Christ had risen!

It is so clear a child sees it immediately: "the Sabbath according to the commandment" comes between Friday and Sunday. ("The Lord's Day" of Revelation 1:10 is the Sabbath, for God calls the Sabbath "My holy day," Isaiah 58:13). His presence is in the Sabbath. To the extent that we love Him, we also love His holy day.

But, there are many sincere people who do not see this truth. Has God changed His holy Sabbath day? We must examine some of the reasons why they are confused.

No, God says, He has not changed His law regarding the Sabbath. "I am

the Lord, I do not change" (Mal. 3:6). There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that He made any change in His holy law. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). Why should He change anything that is "perfect"? He loves us too much to change such a blessed gift!

Jesus regularly kept the seventh-day Sabbath, for we read in Luke 4:16 that "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." Yes, when He said to the Jews, "I have kept My Father's commandments," He told the truth (John 15:10).

All of the apostles followed His example in keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day. For example, the Book of Acts tells of 84 sabbaths that the Apostle Paul kept, but not one Sunday!

"But," someone may ask, "doesn't it tell of one first day of the week that Paul kept?" No, Acts 20:7, 8 tells of one Saturday night farewell meeting that Paul held with the Christians in Troas, because he was planning to walk 16 miles next day (Sunday) to Miletus, and they would never see him again. (No apostle would have walked 16 miles on the holy Sabbath day).

Luke describes that night meeting as being on "the first day of the week" because the Bible says the Sabbath begins at sundown Friday evening and ends at sundown on Saturday evening (Lev. 23:32). Any night meeting on "the first day of the week" would therefore have to be on Saturday night. And Mark 1:32 tells how on one Saturday "at evening, when the sun had set," the Sabbath being over, the people brought many sick people to Jesus to be healed.

That is a delightful way to keep the Sabbath, "from evening to evening," sunset to sunset. If you try to keep it from midnight to midnight, you're asleep and you can't consciously welcome God's holy day! How could you

welcome some special visitor who came at midnight while you were asleep?

Why do many observe Sunday, and not the holy Sabbath day that the Lord "blessed and hallowed"? It is simple: someone without the authority of God changed it. He instructed His holy prophet Daniel to predict that this would happen. In chapter 7 the prophet described the rise of four world empires in history (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), after which there would arise another great power, the "little one [horn] ... speaking pompous words" (vs. 8) that would combine church and state and would "intend to change times and law" (vs. 25). Both Daniel and Revelation state that he would exercise his great power for 1260 years.

Paul described the same power in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 as one "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

John's book of Revelation describes the same power: "And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, ... And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb" (13:5-8).

We have to decide then which "power" we will follow--the holy One who created the earth in six days and sanctified His holy Sabbath for us to keep, or the one who has dared to change God's law and direct people to observe Sunday instead.

The Unique Adventist Concept of the Everlasting Gospel

Ellen White was overjoyed when she heard what the two messengers (A.T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner) presented at and after the 1888 Conference. She was glad that the message went beyond what she called "the good old

doctrines," for she said it was "fresh light." "Justification by faith" is "fresh" to us and to the Evangelical world for "it is the third angel's message in verity." [1]

"Every fiber of my heart said amen," she said, because here at last was the unique, distinct Seventh-day Adventist concept of the everlasting gospel "which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." [2] Thus it had to go beyond that of the popular Sunday-keeping churches.

In fact, the Sabbath truth comes to be implicit in a full and complete view of justification by faith because the Sabbath is the "sign" of true faith. [3] Where the Sabbath truth is denied, there has to be either a counterfeit or immature view of justification by faith. [4]

One wonders if Seventh-day Adventist evangelism has given these grand truths a fair trial. Rightly conceived, with no "mixture of poisonous error," justification by faith becomes the message that will raise up people all over the world who will "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The fruitage will be phenomenal, and believers will prepare for the coming of Christ in their generation. [5]

Just now the Holy Spirit is calling people worldwide to keep holy His Sabbath day; for that's the special day when He meets with them to teach them. And His great fourth commandment assures all who will believe, they will know the joy of Sabbath-keeping rest "in Christ."

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] Review and Herald, April 1, 1890.

[2] MS 5, 1889; Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 91,

92.

- [3] See E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 37-45 (Glad Tidings ed., 1999); *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 140-144 (CFI ed., 2016).
- [4] See A. T. Jones, 1893 General Conference Bulletin, pp. 243-245, 261, 262, 342-343, 358.
- [5] See Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 29, 1892.

Chapter 20

Matthew 24 and 25

The spiritual condition of the church worldwide is pictured in the parable of the "Ten Virgins," all of whom "slept." When the cry went forth suddenly, "The Bridegroom cometh!" five sprang awake and trimmed their lamps to go to the "wedding." The other five had carelessly neglected to get the oil of the Holy Spirit, and it was too late now; they were shut out (Matt. 25:1-10).

This oil is not the Pentecost early rain proportions of the Holy Spirit. The oil represents the latter rain message which Christ commissions the Holy Spirit to give to a receptive church. Having received the message, the church experiences the Holy Spirit. Then follows the Spirit's voice, through His messengers, heard resoundingly throughout the world, giving the "loud cry," which lightens the earth with God's glory.

As we read the parable of the virgins together with what Revelation says about the "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7, 8), it becomes clear that the five wise "virgins" sleeping is the same lethargy as the Bride-to-be neglecting to "make herself ready for the marriage." The parable does not say that the Bride eventually refused to "make herself ready." But the five foolish virgins did.

In some manner the five wise virgins do have oil in their lamps. They have been receptive to the Holy Spirit's last-day message. This receptivity serves them well for even though they too sleep, as do the five foolish virgins, when awakened by the cry, "The Bridegroom cometh" the oil is sufficient for their lighted lamps.

The Lord sent "the beginning" of the Holy Spirit's latter rain in a "most precious message" [1] delivered at the General Conference Session in Minneapolis in 1888. The essence of this message was the call of Christ to the leadership of the Laodicean church to "repent."

"[Revelation 3:14-20, quoted.] This message has not had the influence that it should have had upon the mind and heart of the believers. The true state of the church is to be presented before men, and they are to receive the word of God not as something originating with men, but as the word of God. Many have treated the message to the Laodiceans as it has come to them, as the word of man. Both message and messenger have been held in doubt by those who should have been the first to discern and act upon it as the word of God. Had they received the word of God sent to them, they would not now be in darkness." [2]

For decades the Seventh-day Adventist Church has denied her history, saying that the Minneapolis Conference was a case of mistaken identity--the 1888 message was only a "re-emphasis" of historic Protestantism, not the beginning of the latter rain and the loud cry; and whatever it was, it wasn't really rejected. There was only a temporary resistance which was later repented of and the sin of resistance was cancelled.

The message was indeed what Ellen White said it was--the beginning of the work of the fourth angel of Revelation 18; and in a great degree it was rejected, not by the church at large, but by the leadership of that era. And there has never been a true and faithful recovery and proclamation of the message. When we begin to grasp the enormity of these facts, we sense that no issue before us can compare in importance with the problem of actually insulting the Holy Spirit.

It was His plan that the General and local Conference leadership personnel not stand "aloof" or hostile to the message, but heartily receive it.

Recognizing and joyfully accepting truth, the entire church leadership would have responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and our publishing houses and the Review and Herald would have joined unitedly and harmoniously in the glad work. The laity were ready and would have cooperated. Thus the gospel commission could have been completed in that generation. It wasn't.

What did not happen then must happen in the future. And the "scenario" will happen because the Lord Jesus has not died in vain. He will yet see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied (cf. Isaiah 53:11). He has many honest-hearted people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who will be loyal to Him and to His truth, even unto death. Corporate and denominational repentance is the work embodied in the antitypical Day of Atonement. Satan is determined to oppose it to the bitter end. Let us make sure that we do not stand on the enemy's side.

In the hour of crisis the five foolish young women had been absorbed in self-interests, and had neglected to search for what Peter says is "the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12). What's happening behind the scenes is a wedding. The parable is clear as sunlight: "they that were ready went in with [the Bridegroom] to the marriage and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:10). The ones "ready" are the same as those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4). It's just that simple.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91, 92.

[2] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1051; cf. Letter S24, 1892.

Chapter 21

Worship the Creator

Many Christians are suspicious of the idea of "present truth." The Seventh-day Adventist Church embraces the concept, since its most unique doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary is based on the book of Daniel, a book that was closed until the end time.

Ellen White taught it clearly, and connects it with the message given to the "messengers" God raised up, specifically, E. J. Waggoner. "Questions were asked at that time. 'Sister White, do you think that the Lord has any new and increased light for us as a people?' I answered, 'Most assuredly. I do not only think so, I but can speak understandingly. I know that there is precious truth to be unfolded to us if we are the people that are to stand in the day of God's preparation.' Then the question was asked whether I thought the matter better drop where it was, after Brother Waggoner had stated his views of the law in Galatians. I said, 'By no means.'" [1]

"Elder E. J. Waggoner had the privilege granted him of speaking plainly and presenting his views upon justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ in relation to the law. This was no new light, but it was old light placed where it should be in the third angel's message. What is the burden of that message? John sees a people. He says, 'Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus' (Rev. 14:12). This people John beholds just before he sees the Son of man 'having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle' (verse 14)." [2]

God is the same yesterday and forever and His word tells us all we need to know about Him, but seeing what has always been in His word gives new

meaning to "old" light. The message of the third angel of Revelation 14 has been here from centuries ago, but God found it necessary to make a clearer connection to the concept of righteousness by faith through the message given in 1888. "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'it is the third angel's message in verity.'" [3]

The fact that the messages of the angels in both Revelation 14 and 18 are in a loud voice, suggests the universality of their relevance to all humanity. That relevance is based on the fact that all humanity has sinned in our original ancestor, Adam. There are those who resist the idea that we are all in this sinful condition without having had any choice or say in the matter ourselves, forgetting that they not only inherited a self-centered nature, but have confirmed it by personal acts of sin.

Ellet J. Waggoner gives this perspective: "What would you think of a man drowning in the ocean, who, when someone throws him a rope, looks at it, and then says: 'I know that I am drowning, and that the only hope I have lies in my getting hold of that rope; but I will not take hold of it unless I know that it has really been my own fault that I fell into the water. If it was my own fault, then I will take it, because I am the only one who is to blame for my being in this condition. But if, on the other hand, someone pushed me into the water, and I could not help myself, then I will have nothing to do with that rope.' Such a man would be considered devoid of common sense. Then, acknowledging that we are sinners and in a lost condition, let us take hold of the salvation that is [given] to us." [4]

Since the sin problem is a universal one, the solution worked out by the Godhead needed to be universal. Even though with perfect foreknowledge they knew many would spurn the gift, Jesus was begotten of the Father in human flesh as the second Adam (Romans 5). On Him was laid "the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). When the books are opened in the final judgment, no

one will be able to say that God did not pay for his or her sins.

Many people fear the judgment of God, and well they should if they believe it is done by an impassive, disinterested being who arbitrarily wants to see how many people He can keep out of heaven. They imagine Him like some evil Santa Claus who is keeping His "naughty or nice" list. Yet, we know that God is love, and the Bible describes love as "love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered" [some versions translate this as "it keeps no record of wrongs"] (1 Cor. 13:4-5, New American Standard Bible). If love does not keep a record of wrongs, why does the Bible speak of record books in heaven where God blots out our sin?

The seeming contradiction is easily resolved. God does keep a record, but not against us, but to explain His actions. The plan of salvation brought justification, or a "verdict of acquittal" for every human that has ever lived on this earth, but we are not forced to accept that verdict. When the "hour of His judgment" comes, God needs records to show that He provided a fair opportunity to every human being to make a choice. Throughout our lifetime, God has brought circumstances which cause us to come to a decision for or against the grace of God. The "evidence" for justification in our case is not our own obedience, but Christ's total identity with us as our second Adam and our sacrifice. He died for every one, accepts every one, and treats them generously as though they were forgiven. God is already reconciled to us (see, for example, Gal 2:16-21).

Only the work of the Creator God through the agency of His Holy Spirit can make this reconciliation a reality in our hearts and minds. The Bible presents a message that must lighten the earth with glory. It meets and complements the heart-longings of all who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are now scattered throughout Babylon, awaiting the final

call to come out of it. Righteousness by faith in this time of the cleansing of the sanctuary does more than prepare people to die "in the Lord." It makes possible a ripening of the harvest that prepares them for the sickle when the divine Farmer is told to "thrust in Thy sickle, and reap" (Rev. 14:13-16).

The process of coming out of Babylon involves putting away sin, which requires cooperation with the Holy Spirit. "The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up--the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God." [5]

Praise God for such a blessed promise!

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 219.

[2] Ibid., p. 211, emphasis added.

[3] Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, "Repentance the Gift of God," April 1, 1890.

[4] Ellet J. Waggoner, General Conference Daily Bulletin, "Bible Study: Letter to the Romans--No. 9," March 17, 1891, p. 137.

[5] Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 98, 99.

Chapter 22

End Time Deceptions

One of the great "end-time deceptions" brought out in Tuesday's lesson is the immortality of the soul. If Christ did not die on His cross to pay the penalty of the sinner's debt, then we have no atonement to unite us with God, no forgiveness of our sins, and divine agape is obscured.

Agape means ultimate selflessness. It makes all consideration for personal well-being entirely secondary. Agape chooses complete self-emptying, eternal loss, eternal death. Agape describes the character of God. "God is agape (love)" (1 John 4:8).

Could this explain what really happened on the cross? For Christ to redeem a lost world required that He pay the price for sin completely. He must stand before God in the sinner's place, and be a condemned sinner--no longer a beloved Son. He must bear, from His standpoint as the sinner's substitute, the Father's frown for disobedience and wrath against sin. This meant that He must truly die, be deprived of life and consciousness, not just for three days and three nights, but for all eternity. This meant that all hope of a glad resurrection and reunion with His Father in heaven must be abandoned. Any hope of ever again enjoying heaven must be forsaken. To take the sinner's place meant that He must endure the agony of eternal separation from the Father. The penalty for transgression of the holy and just law must involve all this.

Agape is love so great that the Godhead was willing to have all this take place on the cross of Calvary in order to make redemption for lost souls possible. The Father suffered just as much as the Son did in the gut-wrenching agony of Gethsemane and the horror of Calvary.

Did this take place when Christ paid the price for man's redemption when He experienced the equivalent of eternal death, the penalty for sin?

In describing the agonies Christ endured on the cross Ellen White writes: "Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race." [1]

Christ died the equivalent of the "second death" on the cross of Calvary. It is the death from which there is no resurrection (Rev. 20:6, 9, 14). Ellen White explains the agony of final separation from the Father which Christ endured: "The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt." [2]

There are many in the Christian world who do not begin to understand what happened on the cross. To them the atonement involves no more than the physical agonies of the crucifixion. Terrible as these are, they do not begin to equate with the mental and emotional agony which Christ endured. Many believe that Jesus and the penitent thief enjoyed a glad reunion in the realms of glory only minutes after the crucifixion itself.

The basis for this serious error is the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul. This is why, in the matter of the atonement, this doctrine of immortality is the key deception. There is no way the atonement can be fully understood and thus effect a heart-reconciliation of the sinner with God by any who believe in the doctrine of the soul's natural immortality.

A beautiful, heaven-sent antidote for the terrible deceptions which have held captive so many minds in the Christian communion is the 1888 message of Christ our righteousness. With its emphasis upon the vital themes of salvation, the message of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner presents the New Testament gospel in a light not seen since apostolic times. [3]

While neither Ellen White nor Jones and Waggoner ever used the word agape, their whole message is vibrant with the agape theme. To give this message to the peoples of earth, "the message that God commanded to be given to the world," [4] is to present the truths of the Bible in a setting which will appeal to hungry minds everywhere. It is in the light of this message that the deception of the immortal-soul idea, with all its related errors, will be seen for what it is. This will do much to prepare the way for the lightening of the earth with the glory of the fourth angel (Rev. 18:1-3).

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] See Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 473.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91-92.

Chapter 23

America and Babylon

Before we begin our discussion of "America and Babylon," please note a typographical error in Monday's lesson, second paragraph. The Quarterly states: "This prophetic time period (using the day-year principle) began with the supremacy of the papacy, A.D. 38, and terminated in 1798 ..." You may notice that there appears to be an extra blank space before the 38. The date should read A.D. 538, which is when the political power of the last of the three Arian tribes that were in opposition to the papal position on the nature of Christ, was destroyed in Italy.

The Heruli, who accepted the Arian position controlled the city of Rome until A.D. 475, when the Ostrogoth king, Theodoric, destroyed their power in Italy, and assumed the kingdom. Theodoric was a benevolent and tolerant king who did not persecute persons of divergent religions. Under his rule, peace reigned throughout Italy, except in the city of Rome. There papal intrigue and religious strife continued. Appeal was made to the emperor of the eastern division of the old Roman Empire for political support of the pope's claim to absolute authority over civil and religious affairs.

Emperor Justinian entered the fray, sending a letter of support to the pope at Rome that rendered all honor and authority to the "apostolic chair," and recognized the bishop of Rome as the head of all churches in the empire. In June of 533 the Arian kingdom of the Vandals in North Africa was attacked by Justinian's General Belisarius. Within a year, the Vandals were destroyed, and Belisarius turned his army toward Italy and the Arian Ostrogoths. A large army of the Ostrogothic nation assembled at Rome to defend against the invasion. They withstood the siege for over a year, but finally Rome was lost to Belisarius in March of 538.

The last of the Arian kings was destroyed, and the political and religious power of the bishop of Rome was firmly established through the union of church and state, supported by the army of the empire. The bishop of Rome became the corrector of heretics and the maker of kings. "The system [pagan Rome] which had been conquered [by Christianity] was that in which the State recognizes and makes use of religion only for its political value, and only as the servant of the State. This was paganism ... The system which was established by the perversion of Christianity ... was a system in which the State is made the servant of the church. This was the papacy." [1]

"Christ had set Himself before His disciples as the one possessing all power in heaven and in earth. ... This put Jesus Christ above the State, and put allegiance to Him above allegiance to the State; this denied the supremacy of Rome." [2] "Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:3-6) came to full power in A.D. 538, riding the beast of the civil government, through which she controlled the consciences of men. In fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, control of civil and religious affairs remained under papal power for 1260 years, until 1798 when a "deadly wound" was inflicted as a result of the French Revolution's rejection of all things concerning the God of heaven-including the seven day weekly cycle established at creation.

From the conversion of Clovis, king of the Franks, in A.D. 508, to the crowning by the pope of Charlemagne as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in A.D. 800, through all the French Catholic kings down to Louis XVI who was beheaded by the French revolutionaries, France had been the papacy's strongest political supporter. But France inflicted the "deadly wound" in 1798 when its General Berthier took Pope Pius VI captive, and the papacy was stripped of both its ecclesiastical and civil power. With the election of a new pope, March 14, 1800, partial ecclesiastical power was reestablished, but only over a restricted territory in Italy.

In an effort to reassert herself as sovereign over all nations and peoples, the papacy began a series of political maneuverings and ecclesiastical proclamations. On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius declared that Mary was herself immaculately conceived by her mother in order to provide a sinless womb through which the Son of God could be born in sinless human flesh, untouched by the infirmities of fallen humanity (contrary to the biblical teaching of Heb. 2:14-18). During the ecumenical council called Vatican I, a declaration of papal infallibility was made on July 18, 1870. The Lateran Treaty between the papacy and the National Fascist Party in Italy controlled by Benito Mussolini, was signed on February 11, 1929. This political treaty created the Vatican State and formed the sovereign territory of the Holy See. But, this was not the healing of the "deadly wound." That wound will not be healed until the papacy once again holds both civil and religious authority, controlling the consciences of men as it did for 1260 years.

In the years leading up to the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis, there was much afoot in the United States that was leading toward union of church and state in this country. In 1861, a denomination in Pennsylvania known as the Covenanters, created a petition that complained that the U.S. Constitution made no reference to Jesus Christ and the law of God. Without considering that this was an intentional exclusion, designed by the founders of this nation to preserve full separation of church and state, this Presbyterian church group tried to draw a connection between the sin of slavery and the "religious deficiency" of the Constitution. They felt that if the name of God and a recognition of Him and His law were inserted somewhere into the Constitution, then we would become more Christ-like, and slavery, drunkenness, and debauchery would disappear from the nation. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the National Reform Association (NRA) were formed and made this argument a nation-wide movement. They sought to have Congress write an Amendment to the Constitution that would make America a "Christian nation," and "one nation

under God."

In the January 13, 1887 issue of the Christian Statesman, the official magazine of the NRA, it was stated: "Our remedy for all these malefic influences, is to have the government simply set up the moral law and recognize God's authority behind it, and lay its hand on any religion that does not conform to it." What "religions" did not conform to the NRA's idea of proper religion? In a speech delivered at the 1873 National Reform convention by Jonathan Edwards, vice president of the Association, he said: "We use the word religion in its proper sense, as meaning a man's personal relation of faith and obedience to God." He went on to name those whom he thought did not have a "proper" relation of faith to God, and his list included the atheists, deists, Jews, and Seventh-day Baptists. "These all are, for the occasion, and as far as our Amendment is concerned, one class. They use the same arguments and the same tactics against us. They must be counted together." [3]

Over 200 Amendment proposals seeking to make America a "Christian nation" were introduced to Congress between 1894 and 1984. The National Reform movement morphed into the Christian right in the late 1970s, and has been a notable force in politics since then. It is associated with several institutions and universities including the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council.

Under the "one nation under God" proposal, the First Amendment guarantee of both freedom of religion and freedom of speech would be annihilated. All persons, whether they wanted to or not, would be compelled to adopt the "religion" sanctioned by the State and prevented from speaking against it. At this point, the "deadly wound" will be healed, and the prophecy will come to fulfillment. The second beast that came up "out of the earth" (an uncivilized area of the world) at the "time of the end" (beginning in 1798 when the "deadly wound" was inflicted upon the papacy) will "speak as a

dragon," and then the "image of the beast" will be made and the prophecy will be fulfilled. Then will, "all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her [Babylon] fornication" (Rev. 18:3).

The Scripture tells us, "he exercises all the authority of the first beast [papal Rome] on his behalf and compels the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed" (Rev. 13:12, Holman Christian Standard Bible [HCSB]). When "Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" again "rides the beast" (Rev. 17:3-6), America will become the right arm of the papacy. "By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near." [4]

But the good news is that when this comes to pass, the third angel's message--the "most precious message" brought by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in 1888--will have also come to full realization. The proclamation of Christ and His righteousness will be going forth around the world under Latter Rain power, calling all who will listen to "come out of her My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

"The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning. He will not close up the period of probation until the message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. ... The message of Christ's righteousness

is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel." [5] The proclamation of the 1888 message in all its glory is what will hasten the second coming of Christ. By our delay, "our careless, indifferent attitude" and hesitance regarding this message, we are compromising truth, and placing "the character of God and His throne ... into jeopardy." [6]

Jones asked the congregation in 1893, "Are you living day by day, and hour by hour, in the presence of that terrible fact that it is time for God Himself to work, if His integrity is going to be maintained to all the world? It is a terrible fact; it is a fearful position. It brings us to the point of such consecration as not a soul of us ever dreamed of before; unto the place of such consecration, of such devotion, as will hold ourselves in the presence of God, with that fearful thought that 'It is time for Thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void Thy law.'" [7]

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] A. T. Jones, *The Great Empires of Prophecy*, p. 372, 1898.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

[3] See A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics, or Rome and the United States of America*, pp. 723-725 (emphasis in original), 1891.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 451.

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 19.

[6] See 1893 General Conference Bulletin, p. 73.

[7] *Ibid.*

Chapter 24

Gods Seal or the Beasts Mark

In fulfillment of Revelation 14:6-14, God is sending a special gospel message to enlighten all people, so that those who are determined to be true to Christ can make the right decision. Thus the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will be the testing point for, or against, Christ.

The Lord, in this last-day threefold message, solemnly warns against worshipping or obeying the beast power or receiving its mark. By urging men to worship Christ as the Creator instead of worshipping the beast and his image, the threefold message strikes into the heart of the issue. It calls out a remnant who keep both the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Whether to keep the true Sabbath or the false one will be the focal point in placing the seal of God in the forehead (Rev. 7:1-3), or the mark of the beast in the forehead or in the hand (14:9-11).

If the 1888 message "is the third angel's message, in verity," [1] it is obvious that Evangelical concepts cannot substitute for it, because the popular Sunday-keeping churches are not proclaiming the message of the seal of God and the mark of the beast. In fact, the genuine justification by faith message of 1888 "is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." [2] That must include observance of the fourth commandment! Yet the Evangelical churches have generally opposed the Sabbath and sanctuary truths for the entire period of Seventh-day Adventist existence. Something somewhere does not add up. Can we find help in the Bible itself?

The third angel brings no isolated message on his own. Two angels have preceded him and he only "followed them." The first one sets the stage,

"having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. 14:6). Therefore the Good News must be in the third angel's message as much as in the first angel's.

"The seal of God" is pure gospel, and is the other side of the coin of the "mark of the beast." John links the seal of God in Revelation 7:1-4 with the three angels' messages of chapter 14, because both passages are concerned with finding and saving a group of people known as the "144,000." The prophet realizes that there is no way that such a group can be prepared to stand "without fault before the throne of God" (14:5) unless that "everlasting gospel" of grace is finally understood and proclaimed in its fullness.

What is implicit here is the clearest, most powerful presentation of the Good News that has ever lightened the earth, because it must perform a work of grace never before accomplished. Never has such a group of "144,000" been prepared for withstanding Satan's final thrust of temptation, and for translation without seeing death.

At the General Conference Session of 1893, A. T. Jones asked: "Which would you rather have, the completeness, the perfect fullness, of Jesus Christ, or have less than that, with some of your sins covered up that you never know of? [Congregation: "His fulness."] But don't you see, the Testimonies have told us that if there be stains of sin there, we cannot have the seal of God. How in the world can that seal of God, which is the impress of His perfect character revealed in us, be put upon us when there are sins about us? He cannot put the seal, the impress of His perfect character, upon us until He sees it there. And so He has got to dig down to the deep places we never dreamed of, because we cannot understand our hearts." [3]

The "mark of the beast" is not a calamity or crisis that God brings on the earth. We are not to think evil of Him! According to Revelation 13, it is the devil who brings it as the final outworking of rebellious human history. And

Heaven is powerless to prevent it. None of the horrors that prophecy predicts are what God brings; He is warning us of what human history will inevitably lead to.

Satan's ruse will ruin the earth. It will favor the love of self with its attendant pride and arrogance. The seal of God is the sign of the cross, the experience of self being crucified with Christ through an appreciation of His love revealed there. The mark of the beast is the opposite, the badge of devotion to self-interest, a total instinctive heart-reaction against such love. It is the signal for the final collapse of any semblance of order or security on earth. We cannot now imagine the scenes of horror that the final "time of trouble" will bring.

All who receive that "mark of the beast" must ultimately involve themselves in a re-crucifixion of Christ in the person of His saints. Thus on the one hand there will come together at the end of time the full revelation of humanity's sinful depravity, and on the other hand the full disclosure of God's loving justice of agape. The third angel's message defines the issue and catalyzes humanity into those two camps.

Obviously, it means far more than we have superficially assumed. This must be why Ellen White said: "There are but few, even of those who claim to believe it, that comprehend the third angel's message, and yet this is the message for this time. ... Said my guide, 'There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness. This message understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit will lighten the earth with its glory.'" [4]

No one can know justification by faith in its end-time setting who does not render heart-felt obedience to all the commandments of God. This would indicate that Seventh-day Adventists have a better source for proclaiming justification by faith than the popular Sunday-keeping churches' versions. [5]

There can be no continued subservience to the "man of sin" (who created the spurious sabbath) if justification by faith is clearly understood in the light of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

When received and proclaimed by the corporate body of God's people, it will be like blowing the trumpet with the heavenly news, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7).

This Sabbath issue tests everyone. Let your love for Jesus be so true, so strong, and so compelling that you will say, "With God helping me, I will henceforth keep the seventh day which Jesus, my Savior, sanctified for me."

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

- [1] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372; *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.
- [2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 92; italics supplied.
- [3] A. T Jones, "The Third Angel's Message - No. 17," 1893 General Conference Bulletin.
- [4] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, "A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word," Manuscript 15, Nov. 1888, pp. 165, 166.
- [5] Cf. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56, 260, 261.

Chapter 25

Babylon and Armageddon

To set the stage for the great battle of Armageddon, let's first answer some questions to make sure we understand what the Bible tells us about the timeframe and those involved.

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued" (Dan. 12:1).

This verse predicts a "time of distress such as never occurred," which occurs after Michael stands up.

"And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him, who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed" (vs. 7).

What is meant by "finish shattering the power of the holy people"?

"Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand (vs. 10).

How does God purge, purify and refine His "holy people?" God precipitates a time of trouble "such as never occurred."

Why does He do this? The book of Revelation tells us that its purpose is to "reveal" Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:1). He uses human beings to reveal Jesus, but how does He do this?

"In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7).

What is this mystery and how is it accomplished?

"That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27).

So, the mystery of God is finished in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel. Who is this angel?

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever'" (Rev. 11:15).

We can therefore conclude that God will prepare a people at the very end of time who have accepted His purification process so completely that they reflect Christ perfectly.

Ellen White tells us that "Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; ... But Christ declared of Himself: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to

his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble. It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. ... None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls." [1]

At the prompting of Satan, Christ went through great trials and temptations while on this earth, which intensified at the end of His life as He went to the cross. This persecution of Christ continues in the person of His holy people, and like Christ's life, will intensify at the end of human history. But, God will seal His people so He can demonstrate to the angels and watching universe that He can, through the mystery of the indwelling Holy Spirit, write His law in their hearts and His law therefore can be kept.

This is the essence of the 1888 message. It is not through our own works that we are perfected because God has "shattered" the power of His holy people. It is entirely by faith that they are purified in God's refining fire.

After their faith is sealed, God's final judgments will fall in the form of the bowl "plagues" of Revelation 16. These literal plagues have not yet fallen, because they are declared to be the last plagues. They cannot fall until the world has been warned, and the work of salvation has closed. And that work cannot close as long as there is one human soul somewhere who will yet respond to the Good News of the grace of Christ.

As long as the Holy Spirit has been working in the earth, judgments and disasters have brought many people to think and to repent. But before the last plagues can be poured out, the Holy Spirit will have been driven finally from the earth by the rejection of the wicked. It will then be demonstrated that troubles will not bring to repentance those who have rejected God's goodness, for only "the kindness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

It is during the pouring out of these plagues that the warnings against worshiping the beast and his image and receiving his mark will be fulfilled, and the rejectors of God's grace will "have no rest day or night" (Rev. 14:10, 11). These plagues will bring the downfall of Babylon in one day (Rev. 18:8).

What would this world be like if it were not for the restraining power of the Holy Spirit? Multitudes do not realize that they owe all their security and happiness under what measure of law and order prevails, to the blessed ministry of God's Spirit in the earth. During the time of the plagues, all will see clearly that when men give themselves up to the control of Satan, they will themselves produce a hell here on earth.

While imagining that they are being blessed with a marvelous outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, these rejectors will in reality be gathered together for the great battle against God Himself. Although the lost have been rebellious against the principles of God's truth, they have not previously dared to try actually to fight against God. They have known such a battle would be hopeless for them. But now these "spirits of demons ... gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty, ... to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [Armageddon]" (Rev. 16:14, 16).

Israel fought a memorable battle (described in Judges 5:19-21) on the plain of Megiddo in the land of Canaan. God Himself went to battle for His people. The Battle of Armageddon is the Bible way of speaking of the final fruit of an active rejection of grace.

"The work begun in 1844, at the end of the 2300 years, is unique in the universe and brings Christ and the remnant into a new kind of union. There will be a mutual understanding which makes His remnant go with Him into the Most Holy Place. (See Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 251, 255, 261.) ... They will have the faith of Jesus which keeps mortals from sinning.

... This experience awaits the remnant whenever they choose to accept the eye salve of heavenly insight from the True Witness. And when her blindness is gone and at last she can 'see,' then the Bride will sit down with the King on His throne, as He has promised, for both have overcome by the blood of the Lamb." [2]

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623.

[2] Donald K. Short, "Then Shall the Sanctuary Be Cleansed," 1991, p. 92.

Notes:

Bible texts are from the New American Standard Bible.

Chapter 26

The Return of Our Lord Jesus

Why have 2000 years of human suffering had to drag by since Christ the Saviour of the world was born? Why the long delay of the second coming?

The popular view taught through most of these 2000 years is that when good people die they go straight to heaven, or at least to purgatory to be purified for heaven--the doctrine of "natural immortality of the soul." But the Bible teaches that those who die, sleep until the resurrection day (John 11:11). And the resurrection depends on the second coming of Christ, for He alone can raise the dead (John 5:25-29; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). And when Jesus returns, those who are not ready will not be able to endure the glory of His appearing (2 Thess. 1:7-10). And therefore the time of Christ's second coming depends on His people getting ready, for He would not dare to come if they are not ready (Heb. 12:29).

Jesus likens His people getting ready to a farmer's crop growing up and maturing until it is ready for harvest (Mark 4:26-29). The growing up makes it possible for Him to come the second time to "reap" the "harvest" (Rev. 14:14, 15). But the "crop" cannot become mature until "the latter rain" of the Holy Spirit's outpouring comes (Joel 2:23, 24). The "former rain" fell at Pentecost at the beginning of the Christian dispensation; but the latter rain will close that dispensation. Therefore nothing can be more important than for the church to seek the blessing of the latter rain (Zech. 10:1).

And where is the good news? The latter rain is the 1888 message of "much more abounding grace," a clearer view of what the Saviour of the world has done for us, a revelation of His love (agape) that "constrains" every honest-hearted soul to live unto Him and not unto self (2 Cor. 5:14,

15), so that this truth can "lighten the earth with glory" (Rev 18:1-4).

No Fear of His Coming

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. ... If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Obviously, He doesn't want us to be afraid of His returning to our troubled earth. Anyone having no fear about His first coming need not be fearful regarding His second coming. For those who believe, it is easy to see how this is the most welcome, exciting good news. But will it be the same for everyone?

When He went away, two angels assured His disciples, "This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10, 11). Who was "this same Jesus"? He was a physical person, for after His resurrection He told His disciples, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39). He will come as a real Person in a literal, physical body and will interact with real people. "He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. 1:7).

But "this same Jesus" is not One with a different character. If He was loving and compassionate when He was here, He must be the same when He comes again. But what about those who irrevocably reject Him? His love and compassion must take a different form for them. It would not be love to perpetuate an existence which for them, would only be endless misery.

In a democracy, presidents or prime ministers are elected by the people's wishes. But at the present time, the vast majority of earth's inhabitants either don't know about it, don't believe it, don't care about it, or really don't want

Jesus to come back to earth. That being so, then why should He?

Two compelling reasons make His personal return to this world necessary: "A time of trouble" will engulf the world (Dan. 12:1). A new and unhappy development on earth will make His intervention necessary--a final, ominous scene in the last act of the cosmic drama of the ages. Those in rebellion against God will issue a terrible and evil decree causing "as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed, ... and that no one might buy or sell, save one that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:15-17).

In fact, at that fearful time only a few left on earth will not be bent on self-destruction. Christ's second coming will literally be a rescue mission of world proportions. As a nation ousts a tyrannical and cruel usurper and welcomes back its true sovereign, so His loyal subjects will long for, and even plead for, His return. In the end, the only sane and reasonable people left on earth will joyously welcome Christ at His glorious return. The Psalmist represents Him as enthroned upon the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3).

He is the world's rightful Ruler. He has been temporarily ousted by an overthrow engineered by an enemy--Satan, who subverted Adam and Eve in his rebellion (Gen. 3). When Christ first appeared as the world's Saviour, Satan deceived His own people into rejecting and crucifying Him. But far more than the Jews were involved, for "the kings of the earth stood up [took their stand], and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ" (Acts 4:26). Therefore the rightful Ruler of earth must return, take His rightful position and restore His peaceful and beneficent authority after the coup has run its course. The Lord speaks by His ancient prophet:

"Take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly,

and abase the exalted. ... It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it [the crown] to Him" (Eze. 21:26-27, New King James Version).

Although He came the first time as a meek and lowly One, He comes the second time as "KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16).

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 27

You Will Be My Witnesses

The "grandest" thing that ever happened in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is introduced to us in the next 13 weeks of Bible study. Wednesday's lesson "Preparing for Pentecost" alludes to it.

"Grandest"? Well, that depends on how you think of the Day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts. Heaven came down and the apostles "were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The great gospel commission to all the world began. That light has shown throughout the long centuries since. It was "the former rain" of the Holy Spirit.

Ellen White said the message "the Lord in His great mercy sent" in 1888 was Pentecost repeated. The message itself was the initial "showers from heaven of the latter rain," "the beginning" of the Loud Cry yet to "lighten the earth with glory," the fulfillment of Revelation 18. [1]

"Another angel" must come down from heaven having "great power."

If you had lived 2000 years ago, you wouldn't want to sleep through the great Day of Pentecost, would you? Our problem now is that "we" did not receive the Latter Rain when God tried to give it to us. We still await its coming.

But the message has been preserved in the archives, and thousands worldwide are discovering why Ellen White was overjoyed to hear it.

The intimate revelation of Jesus in Acts will be the essence of the "most precious message" that Ellen White said will in a phenomenal way "carry the

truth to the world as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost." She says it will be "the light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory." [2] That's far greater than all our evangelistic efforts combined-thus far in our denominational history.

That final message that will bring to a glorious close the gospel proclamation to "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people," will transcend the fear-curdling impact that we have always assumed will scare people at last to "come out of Babylon." That great and seemingly impossible "if" of John 12:32, 33 which has for nearly 2000 years limited the best efforts of the church of all ages to truthfully fulfill Christ's commission, will at last be bridged in the repentance of the ages: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [people] unto Me. This He said, signifying what death he should die."

Thus the message of Revelation 18 will be a "lifting up" of Christ as crucified and dying. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This is what Ellen White says in direct context with the 1888 message: "The theme that attracts the heart of the sinner is Christ, and Him crucified. ... Present Him thus to the hungry multitudes, and the light of His love [agape] will win men from darkness to light, from transgression to obedience and true holiness." [3]

As the "remnant" church of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 finally receives the "most precious message" which "the Lord in His great mercy sent" to us in 1888, every Seventh-day Adventist church in the world will be transformed and acquire the reputation of being the place to go to hear Christ uplifted. It will be a new public image that replaces our old reputation of being the church where "we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa," says Ellen White. [4] Implicit in the next 13 weeks of

Sabbath School study is a revelation of that heart-gripping truth.

In the "Disciples' Mission" (Monday) the early Christians did what the modern term calls "evangelize," that is, they told everybody they met about Jesus. That word is often misunderstood today-assumed to mean "get people to join your church, increase the numbers of its membership." No; the word actually means "tell good news." And the people already in church often need to hear and understand what the good news means, just as much as people outside. And people outside most of the time won't be interested in joining the church unless you can tell them what the good news is and why the Lord Jesus ever established a "church."

Jesus explained the "core message" they were to tell. "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48).

The message will create and establish for every one who believes the seemingly elusive relationship ("fellowship" is a better word) with the Lord that our Sabbath School Quarterly speaks of so often. That relationship is not something that we acquire by our works of Bible study, prayer, and witnessing. Rather, the fellowship is given to us; it comes through beholding the Christ who suffered and rose again.

There is a corporate sense in which the world church "shall look upon [Him] whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him" until it can be said truthfully and in finality, "in that day there shall be a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 12:10-13:1).

Such repentance includes the actual "remission of sins," that is, sending them away (Luke 24:47). The New Testament word for forgiveness means a

separation from sin, a deliverance from its power. True repentance thus actually makes it impossible for a believer in Christ to continue living in sin. The love of Christ supplies the grand motivation, a change in the life (2 Cor. 5:15).

You find a kind of joy in the experience: "The sadness that is used by God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation-and there is no regret in that! But sadness that is merely human causes death. See what God did with this sadness of yours: how earnest it has made you. ... Such indignation, such alarm, such feelings, such devotion" (2 Cor. 7:10, 11, Good News Bible).

Peter manifested genuine repentance. We can identify with him, for he failed miserably, yet he accepted the precious gift of repentance which Judas refused. After basely denying his Lord with cursing, Peter "went out and wept bitterly" (Mark 14:71; Luke 22:62).

Repentance is to never cease with us. Always afterward tears glisten in our eyes as we think of our sin in contrast to the Lord's kindness to us. In addition, tears of contrition are happy tears. The tempest of contrition always brings the rainbow of divine forgiveness. Even medical scientists recognize there is wholesome healing therapy in tears of contrition, for men as well as for women. We ruin our health and shorten our lives when we resist or suppress the tenderness, the melting influence of God's Spirit that tries to soften our hard hearts.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

- [1] See The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 1336, 1337, and Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 91, 92; 1888

- Materials, p. 1478; Review and Herald, Nov. 22, 1892.
- [2] Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book one, pp. 234, 235.
- [3] Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Nov. 22, 1892.
- [4] See for example, Review and Herald, March 11, 1890.

Chapter 28

Pentecost

"Pentecost" is a big word to Christian people. It came 50 days after Christ's resurrection. The disciples met together to pray and study for 10 days previous, so that by the time that the Day of Pentecost arrived, they were finally in total harmony and unity, in "one accord" (Acts 2:1).

A great blessing came on that day. The true and genuine "gift of tongues" was manifest so that everyone from all parts of the world who were gathered in Jerusalem heard the glad tidings in his own language so he could clearly understand it. The Holy Spirit was given in a fullness that has never since been equaled.

What was it about the message of Pentecost that had such tremendous power that 3000 were converted, truly converted, in a day? There is one "great truth" that shone clearly on the Day of Pentecost that even the apostle Paul did not preach. Speaking to that great crowd of thousands of people from many nations and languages, Peter boldly declared that they had crucified the Son of God: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). A few days later he told them, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... and killed the Prince of life" (3:14, 15). Nothing in Paul's epistles is quite so strong, so directly confrontational!

The greatest "evangelism" of all time was what happened at Pentecost. It was not emotionalism, and what brought the deep conviction of truth on people's hearts was not the miracle of the apostles' speaking foreign languages--a "sign and wonder" indeed, but not the real thing that did it: the apostles proclaimed what had happened when the Son of God died on His

cross.

They didn't "mince words," or say it daintily: "You murdered the Prince of life, the Son of God!" They laid the guilt of the ages upon the souls of those Jews and Gentiles. There was no political making friends and influencing people, no attempt to make the message palatable, to "win" the top leaders by psychology. It was the most direct super-confrontation that has ever been between lowly people and religious society leadership (read it in Acts 2:23, 36; 4:10; 5:30, etc.).

When, at Pentecost, Peter said, "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), immediately came the heart-broken cry, "What shall we do?" (vs. 37). Then when Peter and John healed the paralytic, Peter again said, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead" (3:14, 15). You couldn't yawn and sit on the fence when you heard a charge like that! Then Peter and John told the rulers and leaders of the nation, "Ye crucified Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom God raised from the dead" (4:10).

Ordinary people like the apostles could never have galvanized themselves to tell it like they did had it not been for the 10 days of repentance they spent beforehand. They had knelt very low in self-humiliation; what fools they had been! The Holy Spirit had eleven men in whom self had been "crucified with Christ." This made it possible for the Son of God to be exalted in them.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was a repentance deeper than has ever been known. The murder of the Son of God is the greatest sin ever committed; repentance for that sin is the greatest a human heart can ever know.

A repentance like that of Pentecost is what Christ calls for today. It will

come, like a lost vein of gold in the earth that must surface again in another place. Our idea of repentance can produce only what we see today--hazy, indistinct devotion; lukewarmness. Like medicine taken in quantity sufficient to produce a concentration in the bloodstream, our repentance must be comprehensive, full-range, in order for the Holy Spirit to do a fully effective work.

This full spectrum of repentance is included in "the everlasting gospel." But its clearest definition has been impossible until now, as history reaches the last of the seven churches. The original word "repentance" means a looking back from the perspective of the end: metanoia, from meta ("after"), and nous ("mind"). Thus, repentance can never be complete until the end of history. Like the great Day of Atonement, its full dimension must be a last-day experience. We have now come to that moment in time.

But what about "1888"? The little group who went through the Great Disappointment of 1844 were deeply beloved of Jesus in a special sense. They refused to give up their faith, confident that the true Holy Spirit was in the Midnight Cry through the Great Disappointment. They were especially dear to His heart (Jesus describes them in His message to "the angel of the church of the Philadelphians," Rev. 3:9, 10).

When new truth came to them (the heavenly sanctuary and the opening of the second apartment), they believed; there was an endearing love for that "little flock" in His eyes. When Rachel Preston brought them the seventh-day Sabbath-truth, they welcomed it; no resisting and fighting it (as "they" did other "most precious" truth forty-plus years later). Then when the first principles of health reform came, again they eagerly accepted. Through the early history of this people, a special heavenly love affair was developing. Not since Pentecost had Jesus found such a group of believers loyal to Him.

The 1888 idea lifted the cross of Christ higher than it had been displayed

since Pentecost. Ellen White said, "Great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost are to shine from God's word in their native purity." [1] The Sabbath and the cross finally came together.

But here the Song of Solomon 5:2-8 comes on stage. [2] The Lover has come "home" to His beloved after a long trip; tired, lonely, hungry, wet from the rain; He longs to be with her intimately. He "knocks" (the Hebrew says banging on the door). The woman whom He loves disdains him, she is too relaxed, gone to bed for the night; why does He bother her now? (The world is too comfy a place as it is, says the church of the Laodiceans.) Finally, she forgets about her own selfish comfort and thinks about Him out in the darkness, hungry and alone; she belatedly gets up and goes to let Him in, but when she opens the door, He is "gone."

We've been looking for Him for well over a hundred years (cf. 6:1). Increasingly, thoughtful people see here the story of "our" disdaining Him in the "most precious" message of the beginning of the latter rain. In rejecting the message, says the Lord's servant, we disdained Christ [3], just as "the woman" did her Lover in Song of Solomon 5:3.

Christ's pathetic appeal in His message to "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans" [4] ("be zealous therefore, and repent," Rev. 3:19) demands attention.

--From the writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Aug. 17, 1897, emphasis supplied.

[2] There seems no reason to include this book in the Bible unless it speaks of Jesus and His love for the church. Jesus described it as

"scripture" in John 7:37, 38 (SS 4:15). Paul quoted it in reference to the church in Ephesians 5:27 (SS 4:7). Scholars have long recognized that Jesus quoted the Septuagint version in Revelation 3:20, "I stand at the door and knock."

[3] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 398, 399.

[4] Ellen White identifies this as the Seventh-day Adventist Church (op. cit.).

Chapter 29

Life in the Early Church

In the space of a few weeks the most significant events in human history had happened: Jesus completed His ministry, was crucified, was resurrected, and had ascended to heaven. His confused and frightened followers huddled together as Jesus had instructed them to do. They used their time wisely, probably searching the Scriptures then available to understand how Christ had perfectly fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies. We can almost imagine the men who walked with Christ on the Emmaus Road repeating everything they could remember of how He had explained the Scriptures to them.

No matter how compelling, the method of using various texts to prove theological points, argument alone is inadequate. Preaching never reaches the heart without the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that and told His disciples "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18, New American Standard Bible; "comfortless" in the King James Version). Jesus promised, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17). Ezekiel had predicted this centuries before: "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Eze. 36:27).

The Ezekiel passage defines the process of God's way to achieve righteousness in sinful humans and shows the essential role of the Holy Spirit in this process. Thus, Pentecost fulfilled both the Ezekiel prophecy as well as Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit would go from "abides with you" to "will be in you."

The early believers had achieved a level of unity during their study time in the upper room waiting for Pentecost. However once the Holy Spirit was given, more study was necessary to fully understand Christ's mission, even though most of them had witnessed what He had done. As our lesson notes (page 24), the character of worship in the early church was based on their Jewish origins. Especially for those living in Jerusalem, going to the temple to worship would have been logical. God gave them time and circumstances that allowed them to devote study to the grand implications of the cross and how the Jewish sacrificial system fit into this picture.

The practice of Judaism had become so formalized that adherents had lost sight of the significance of the sacrificial system. It was not seen as a system designed to typify the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, but as a means of manipulating God. The Jews believed that the act of bringing a sacrifice was what saved, not the ultimate Sacrifice to which it pointed. Their ancestors had made that old covenant mistake centuries before when they told Moses at Saini that "everything you say we will do," the implication being that then God was obligated to do what He promised.

The ingrained thinking of the early Christians had been formed in Judaism and needed clarifying. They needed to understand that the sacrificial system was never given as a method of "works righteousness," but was meant to constantly remind people of their need for the living sacrifice that Christ made with His own body. Their misunderstanding of Christ's mission was grounded in their misunderstanding of God's promises made to Abraham.

"God promised a great household to Abraham. But this house was to be built upon the Lord, and Abraham so understood it, and began at once to build. Jesus Christ is the foundation, for 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' 1 Cor. 3:11. The house of Abraham is

the house of God, which is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.' Eph. 2:20." [1]

In His promises to Abraham, God also promised that Abram would inherit the land. It was one of the most valued promises to the Jews who were attacked through the centuries by nations wanting to take their land. It was convenient to forget that they failed to follow God's directive to completely clear the land on God's schedule. Instead, they compromised and intermarried, placing obstacles in the way of following God's commands completely.

There is another aspect that is more subtle, but is important to all Christians including those of our day. The disciples had asked Christ when He would be "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). By this it can be fairly implied that they included both Abraham's posterity and the land God promised to him. But Abraham had been dead for a long time, and therefore could not benefit from any fulfillment of the promise unless he and his sleeping progeny were resurrected.

"What does this demonstrate?--Simply this, that the promise in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, that Abraham and his seed should possess the land, had reference to the resurrection of the dead, and to nothing short of that. ... Even if Abraham be left out of the question, yet the fact remains that the promise to the seed must include all of the seed, and not a part merely. ... In thus referring to this promise, which was well known to the Jews, Stephen showed them most plainly that it could be fulfilled only by the resurrection of the dead through Jesus. ... If he [Abraham] had expected to receive it in this present life, he would have been disappointed if he had come to his death without having it fulfilled. But God plainly told him that he must die before it was fulfilled. Therefore since Abraham believed God, it is very clear that he understood about the resurrection, and that he believed it. The resurrection of the dead, ... was ever the center of the hope of the true

children of Abraham." [2]

God explained to Abraham that Israel was not to possess the land of promise until the iniquity of the Amorites was not then full. "That shows that God would give the Amorites time to repent, or, failing that, to fill up the measure of their iniquity, and thus demonstrate their unfitness to possess the land. And that teaches us further that the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed could be possessed only by righteous people." [3]

This complex but important concept needed to be understood by the early believers, and especially those of our day. The early believers were partially motivated by a sense of urgency since they believed Christ's return was to happen very soon. They were eager to study and understand so the message could be given to the entire world.

The message was that of the cross of Christ and the principle that righteousness could come only through the faith of Jesus accepted by His followers. That fire, kindled at Pentecost, began to dwindle as the years came and went and people were distracted with the routines of living life and the hostility that the message always produces in some. The Lord rekindled the fire by sending the 1888 "messengers" (A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner) with their greater understanding of righteousness by faith, and for a while people were again interested in studying the message in its many facets, but the passage of time tends to dampen fervor.

The early pioneers of the message of righteousness by faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are all sleeping now. Yet, God waits to return. Why? If God was unwilling to take the land from the pagan Amorites in Abraham's day and the pagan Romans in the apostolic time, perhaps He is waiting for all those that will come to repentance to have the opportunity. Just as it was not the will of God that Israel should wander 40 years in the wilderness before entering the promised land, it is not His will today to delay

His coming. But in mercy to the world, Jesus does delay His coming that sinners may hear the message of the gospel of righteousness by faith and if they are willing, come to repentance.

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years." [4]

"Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God." [5]

Like the early church believers, it takes time and effort to study the various facets of the message given by the 1888 "messengers," but the salvation of souls is what is at stake. Let us continue studying this "most precious message" so the world can hear it, come to repentance, and Christ can end the delay.

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant: God's Promises to Us*, p. 54; Glad Tidings ed., 2002.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 57.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book one, p. 69.

[5] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 450.

Chapter 30

The First Church Leaders

When we were little tikes in Sabbath School, we used to have a saying which we thought was funny. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead, that's why they were called "sad-you-sees." Why didn't they believe in the resurrection? Because they didn't believe in God's promise, His everlasting covenant.

The resurrection was clearly taught in the experience of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. When Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin, he started his powerful speech with God's promise to Abraham and continued throughout his lengthy recorded sermon with allusions to the covenant (Acts 7). Our Sabbath school lesson (page 33) asserts Stephen's sermon was a "covenant lawsuit" prosecuted before the Sanhedrin.

Stephen's allusion to God's resurrection promise to Abraham did not go over the heads of the Sanhedrin. For example, Stephen commenced with God's command to Abraham to "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:3). Abraham journeyed with his family and brought his deceased father into Canaan and God gave "him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed [Descendant, Christ] after him" (vs. 5). Abraham owned nothing in Canaan, not even a burial plot for his father. It's obvious from these words that God never intended to give Abraham just a tiny little space in the Middle East. God promised the whole earth in righteousness to Abraham and his descendants.

When Abraham died, he still did not own Palestine, but he believed

God's promise: "By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles [nomadic tents] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9-10). "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (vs. 13).

E. J. Waggoner remarks on this passage that the patriarchs "plainly declared, says Paul, that they looked for a country, and we have already learned that that country was the whole earth; and since they were not disappointed because the country was not given to them in their lifetime, it is evident that they understood the promise to embrace the resurrection from the dead." [1]

Paul testified of his faith before King Agrippa: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8).

God's promise contains the hope of the resurrection in order to dwell in the new earth in righteousness. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

But all of this is so much familiar ground. It was when Stephen spoke of "the coming of the Just One" (Acts 7:52), that the Sanhedrin lost it and murdered Stephen. Stephen virtually said that God did not dwell in their temple (vss. 47-49). It was anything but righteous. God's covenant with Abraham promised him a coming "Seed" [vs. 5, Descendant] in Whom the

Holy Spirit manifest full and complete righteousness. God dwelt in "the Just [righteous] One" who the Pharisees and Sadducees murdered (vs. 52).

God gave Abraham "the covenant of circumcision" (vs. 8) because he was willing to receive the Holy Spirit's gift of "righteousness by faith" in his heart. It was this gift of God's Spirit which the teachers of the law refused at Christ's coming and thus committed the unpardonable sin and murdered the righteous One. Because they refused to believe God's covenant they did not recognize the promised "Seed"--their Messiah. Thus they were "uncircumcised in heart" and rejected their righteousness even though they claimed to "have received the law" (vs. 53). In resisting the Holy Spirit and rejecting their Messiah they manifest Old Covenant unbelief in their hearts.

"They were cut to the heart" (vs. 54). In other words, the Holy Spirit got through, but it did them no good. They rejected the message and the messenger.

When Stephen testified, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (vs. 56), he virtually was saying, "I see the resurrected One standing vindicated at God's right hand," and that sealed Stephen's fate.

One of the key themes of the 1888 message is the good news of God's everlasting covenant. The New Covenant was God's one-sided promise to Abraham and his descendants to give them the entire earth made new for "an everlasting possession" and the righteousness necessary to inherit it "in Christ." The Old Covenant was the promise of the people at Mount Sinai to perform faithful obedience: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). That Old Covenant became the fundamental thesis of Israel's understanding of God's truth which culminated eventually in the murder of their Messiah. Thus Israel's history demonstrates that the covenant "from mount Sinai ... gendereth to bondage" (Gal. 4:24).

All efforts to fasten Old Covenant "promises" on children and youth are bound to "gender to bondage" in their spiritual experience. Ellen White says, "The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you." [2] God doesn't ask us to promise Him righteousness; He asks us to believe His promises to us.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] E. J. Waggoner, "The Hope of the Promise," Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, vol. 4, no. 10 (May 15, 1889), p. 154.

[2] Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 47.

Chapter 31

The Conversion of Paul

As the party descended the winding grade to the fertile oasis, their long, hot journey was nearly at its end. Below them lay the beautiful expanse of green fields and ripening orchards that surrounded Damascus. Suddenly, a light "above the brightness of heaven" shone round about them. The leader of the group, Saul, was overcome by the intensity of the light and fell to the ground.

Saul was a Roman citizen by birth and a Jew by ancestry. He had received the finest education available at the time. He was well versed in the Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages. For his education, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the illustrious Jewish theologian, and had learned the "perfect manner of the law" (Acts 22:3). He was the "Pharisee's Pharisee," the brightest young lawyer on the Sanhedrin (Phil. 3:5, 6).

His current mission to Damascus was fully backed financially and theologically, by the high priest and the Sanhedrin council. They had given him letters of authority that he might breathe "out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," to bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished for heresy (Acts 9:1; 22:5). Now, lying face down in the dust, he heard a voice. "Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to fight against your conscience!" (Acts 9:4, 5). He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The same voice answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth."

These words struck Saul's heart like a thunderbolt. Jesus of Nazareth was dead, dead and buried! Saul firmly believed that it was only lies circulated by His disciples that stirred the people to think that Jesus was risen from the dead. Trembling with fear, he said, "What shall I do, Lord?" Jesus

answered him, telling him to go into the city and wait for further instructions. The glory was withdrawn and Saul got up, but he found himself totally deprived of sight. He stumbled on the last few miles of his journey "being led by the hand of them that were with [him]."

For three days Saul was "without sight, and neither did eat or drink." During this time, he closely examined his former beliefs regarding Jesus of Nazareth. He recalled how he had fought against Stephen's witness and consented to his unjust execution. How he had personally dragged many of Jesus' disciples before the Sanhedrin for prosecution. In soul agony, he reviewed the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. He was certain that the Messiah was to bear the people's sins, free them from oppression, and renew the nation of Israel to its former glory.

But, in a flash other prophecies blasted through Saul's mind. The Messiah was to be despised and rejected, and wounded for the transgressions of the people; made an offering for sin and cut off from the land of the living (Isa. 53:3-9). Saul knew that Daniel foretold that when the Messiah came He would confirm the covenant with the people for seven years, and "in the midst" of those seven years, He would cause the sacrifice and offerings to cease (Dan. 9:27). But the Temple still stood, and the offerings continued to pour into it. All things continued as they had before, except for the small group of men who called themselves "disciples" of that dead Man, who were going about spreading lies about His power over death.

Tormented by his thoughts, Saul cried out, "Oh Lord, have I been wrong? Have I been fighting against You instead of for You? Help me to understand!" Saul was completely alone in his struggle. He could not appeal to the unconverted Jews of Damascus. They would never believe his story. The followers of Jesus shunned him as a deceiver, refusing him all sympathy. Imprisoned by his blindness and rejected by men, his only source of help and comfort was a merciful God. To this source, he appealed with a

broken and contrite heart.

"Lord, explain to me how Jesus can be the Messiah. The Law plainly teaches that anyone hung on a tree is cursed by You forever" (see Deut. 21:22, 23). "How can Jesus now be the Exalted One, the Consolation and Redemption of all Israel?" (Luke 2:25).

As he reflected on the meaning of these prophecies, Saul's darkened mind was illuminated by the Holy Spirit. He was astonished at his former lack of understanding and ashamed that he had been persuaded by others to reject the truth of who Jesus was. As Saul yielded himself to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to bow in humility before God and confess his unworthiness. He pleaded the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour, asking forgiveness for his sins. With the simplicity of a little child, he began to comprehend the love of God. He saw that Jesus of Nazareth was the embodiment of all the "law and the testimonies," the fulfillment of every sanctuary service.

Saul left Damascus a changed man. He was as zealous as ever, but now he was compelled by a different Spirit. The love of God exhibited on the cross of Calvary gave him no choice. He realized that Jesus died once for all, as corporate humanity, being "made sin for us," and that if "One died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:21, 14). In that one sacrifice, salvation was given to the entire human family (Rom. 5:15-19). The only way anyone can be lost is by rejecting this most precious gift. Henceforth, Saul could only live for Jesus and the vindication of His name.

Saul realized that Jesus died for him, as him. It was no longer Saul who existed, but Paul. Saul and his sins died in Christ on the cross, and how could he live any longer in that old life of rebellion? (see Romans 6:6, 7). Because Christ was risen from the dead, Paul was assured of eternal life. He was alive by the faith of Christ (Gal. 2:16, 20). Forever more Paul could only preach

"Christ and Him crucified," declaring the unbounded grace of God toward sinners. The conversion of Saul is a striking evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin. Saul met the crucified and risen Saviour face to face on the Damascus road and he was changed forever.

In 1888 God sent His message of the risen Saviour to confront His church with their sin of legalism. For forty years, the church had slidden gradually into a spiritual pride that almost excluded the need for faith. We had become Pharisees of the first order. Relying on the power of rhetoric and knowledge of the Bible, preachers could convince a crowd to accept the seventh-day Sabbath and the need to keep the Law of God. But they had preached the Law until they had become "as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain." [1] What was needed by the church to finish the work of God was some much needed rain--Rain sent down from heaven to mature the crop and prepare God's people for translation.

Just as the Jews did while Christ was personally walking this earth, and as they continued to do after the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost upon the spiritually humbled disciples, we corporately have been resistant to the outpouring of the Latter Rain. "A woe is pronounced upon all such unbelief and criticism as was revealed in Minneapolis and as was revealed in Battle Creek [leadership of the church]. By their fruits ye shall know them. Evidence at every step that God was at work has not changed the manifest attitude of those who in the very beginning pursued a course of unbelief which was an offense to God. With this barrier they themselves had erected, they--like the Jews--were seeking something to strengthen their unbelief and make it appear they were right. Therefore they could not drink in the great salvation that the Lord proffered them. The riches of divine grace they refused." [2]

The Holy Spirit was insulted by the way He was treated then and since, and Christ has suffered profound disappointment. "In every church in our

land, there is needed confession, repentance, and reconversion. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description. Unless those who have sinned speedily repent, the deceptions of the last days will overtake them. Some, though they do not realize it, are preparing to be overtaken. God calls for repentance without delay. So long have many trifled with salvation that their spiritual eyesight is dimmed, and they can not discern between light and darkness. Christ is humiliated in his people. The first love is gone, the faith is weak, there is need of a thorough transformation." [3]

It was for the same reason as the Jews that the 1888 message of Christ and His righteousness was resisted and rejected--pride of position and preconceived opinions. "An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world." [4]

Through prayer and heart searching, Saul came to understand and appreciate God's great love for mankind. He could have rejected the message given to him on the Damascus road. He could have continued on in the power and authority of the Jewish church and climbed to great heights in the society of Jerusalem. He had all the world before him if he stayed with his old convictions. If he followed his new faith, life was, at best, uncertain. Would he trade the certainty of an ambitious life for the surety of persecution? It was his choice.

We too have a choice to make. We can continue on in this world's glory or we can kneel at the foot of the cross. One way gives immediate satisfaction, the glory of position and approbation from men. The other path brings possible condemnation from those who oppose the truth, but it also brings the certainty of eternal life. If the love of Christ compels us (2 Cor. 5:14, 15), we will make the right choice.

Let us be like Saul when he came face to face with God on the road to Damascus--"O, Lord, what would You have me do?" "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

--Ann Walper

Endnotes (Ellen G. White):

[1] Review and Herald, March 11, 1890.

[2] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 369, 370.

[3] Review and Herald, December 15, 1904.

[4] Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 234-235.

Chapter 32

The Ministry of Peter

From the very beginning of the early days of Christianity, there have been conflicts about how good the Good News is. The letter to the Galatians is evidence. The early converts from the Jews had to wrestle against a deep mind-set idea that no one could be saved except Jews, that Gentiles were automatically excluded from the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. Remember how Peter had to overcome that prejudice in Acts 10:28 when he was sent to Cornelius?

Deeply laid prejudices seemed almost ineradicable. The "faithful" Jewish Christians just felt in their bones that the gates of the New Jerusalem had to be shut against Gentiles, that Christ was Messiah and Savior only to themselves, that their work as apostles was to go to all the Jews in the Diaspora scattered around the world. But Paul's mind had been enlightened with a far brighter view of how good the Good News is! "God ... will have all men to be saved," the Messiah is already "the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe," He has "abolished death [the second!] and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," and has become the new or second Adam for the entire human race and has given, not merely offered, the "gift" of salvation to "all men" just as Adam gave "condemnation" to them (see 1 Tim. 2:4, 1 Tim. 4:10, 2 Tim. 1:10, Rom. 5:15, 16).

These "big ideas" (all from Paul) stretched the minds and hearts of the early Jewish Christians, and they still challenge our thinking today. Does the Son of God merely "offer" justification to "all men" with the initiative in their hands, or has He on His own initiative given it freely by grace as a "gift" to "all men"? Does He open the gates of the New Jerusalem to "all

men" so that in the end the only ones who are outside are those who themselves refuse by unbelief to enter? Could the Good News be that good?

Many people think that we don't really need to study the gospel because we already understand it. In fact, we have understood the gospel for about 150 years. All we really need is more money so that we can turn up the volume control and amplify our present understanding of the gospel so that more people can hear it around the world and then the work will be finished.

But the Lord surprised all of us in 1888 when he sent two young men (A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner) with a "most precious message" about the gospel. Ellen White said it was "new light." Now sometimes she said it was not new light but said it was old light that had been recovered. There were many times in fact when she said, Yes indeed it is new light, it is additional light, it is in fact, "the beginning of the light of the [fourth] angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." [1] She said that God commanded that this message should be given to the world. Sad but true, many, in fact most of our dear brethren years ago, reacted against the message that has been kept away from the church and from the world.

Calvinism has failed to penetrate the heart of the gospel when it says that Christ died only to provide justification for the elect. Arminianism also failed to penetrate the heart of the gospel for it says that Christ died only to make a provision whereby it might be possible for all men to be justified only if they do something first. The 1888 message broke through the clouds into the sunlight above and said that Paul and the apostle John and the Lord Jesus himself mean exactly what they said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Christ has tasted the second death for every man, he has died every man's second death (see Rev. 2:11, 20:14). There is no reason under heaven why any human being should go into the lake of fire except that he has resisted

and rejected what Christ has already done for him.

This leads into another beautiful truth that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost if you understand how good the Good News is. God's love is a seeking love. He is not waiting for us to find Him. The good shepherd is out looking for his lost sheep.

So the true answer to the question: What must I do to be saved? is not to study your Bible, witness more, pray more, etc. The true Bible answer to that question is just what the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). And then people say, No, this can't be true because there is something besides believing that is required. 100 years ago our brethren did not like the message because they thought it degraded works or it did not give works proper attention. That is the fear today. The Bible does not teach that we are saved by faith and works. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith, but it is a faith which works.

And that leads us to the cross of Christ, to understand what faith is. Faith is a heart appreciation of the tremendous dimensions of the agape love revealed at the cross. Someone asks a question, "Is it really true that what the world church needs is a revelation of Christ and Him crucified? Shouldn't we be preaching against short skirts, TV, and this and that abomination? Shouldn't this be the burden of our message?" We learned this week that if we believe the Bible, the only answer to the sin problem is the cross where there is much more abounding grace.

We have learned about the two covenants, that we are not saved by making promises to God. We are not saved even by trying to keep our promises to God, but we are saved by believing His promises to us. We learned that Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, came to Israel of old, the early church, when they understood the principle of corporate guilt and corporate repentance. They realized that they were the ones who

crucified the Son of God. The Spirit of God fell upon the Gentiles in Cornelius' house when they understood that it wasn't only the Romans and the Jews who crucified Christ but it was they. They partook of that sin even though they were not present at Calvary. The sin of crucifying Christ is the sin of the world.

The apostles are said to have marveled that the Gentiles should experience the same phenomenal response to the cross that the believing Jews did, and thus receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47). Peter and his followers evidently did not expect this response, because Peter was careful in his sermon in Cornelius's home to tell the Gentiles that it was the Jews who "slew and hanged [Christ] on a tree" (vs. 39). He said nothing about the Gentiles being guilty. The phenomenal reception of the Holy Spirit was due to the believing Jews' phenomenal repentance for the sin of the ages--crucifying the Son of God. How could the "innocent" Gentiles share in this experience?

The Holy Spirit sent His words closer home than Peter expected. His contrite hearers identified themselves with the Jews and recognized themselves as fully sharing in the guilt. Only thus could they have shared the depths of repentance which made possible their reception of the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they experienced corporate repentance.

The latter rain will come when we realize our true corporate guilt; that the guilt of others would be our guilt but for the grace of Christ. The guilt of others is our guilt because all of us have the same flesh and sinful nature. All of this beautiful truth imparts a motivation that cures lukewarmness. It is impossible for a world church to be lukewarm if that church understands the gospel.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnote:

[1] Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book one, p. 363.

Chapter 33

Pauls First Missionary Journey

If you are thoroughly human, no doubt you have at times wondered if God has elected you to be saved. You know you need a Saviour; and you know that lots of people are going to be lost. There are sincere Christians who actually believe that God elects some to be saved and others to be lost. A text that appears to support that idea is Acts 13:48. Paul has been preaching the gospel on his first missionary journey to Antioch. Then Luke says: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (King James Version). The New International Version says the same: "All who were appointed for eternal life believed."

It sounds like discouraging bad news for those who are not so "appointed" or "ordained." Some dear people actually give up in discouragement; they tell themselves, "It's too hard; youth say, temptation is too strong; I am sure God has not ordained me to be saved; He hasn't 'appointed' me." Calvinists actually use this text to support their doctrine of double predestination.

But the Greek verb doesn't say what the KJV and NIV say. It is tetagmenoi which is a reflexive form of the verb for "appoint" which means that the translation should read, "As many as appointed themselves for eternal life believed." In other words, they heard Paul preach the good news; they said to themselves, "Hey, I want that! That's for me! I'm going to latch on to this preaching of Paul!" Once they made that decision, then immediately their hearts began to be melted, they learned to appreciate the cross of Christ that Paul was preaching, "they believed."

This has to be the correct understanding according to the context. In

verse 46 Paul addressed the Jews who chose not to believe: "Seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves as unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." What they did was the opposite of what the believers did. It's the same idea, only in reverse. Those who believed were not acting out a preprogrammed agenda determined for them before the foundation of the world (Calvinist "predestination"); they took the truth to themselves, grabbed it, "judged themselves" to be favored of God with the gospel.

So, grab every ray of light that comes your way; don't wait a moment; "I made haste, and delayed not," says David (Psalm 119:60). If you're smart, you'll always grab a bargain the moment you see it. The idea is not that God preaches the gospel indifferently, or only once in a while. The problem is that your own heart can become dull and dilatory and unresponsive. Believe the good news now; everything that God has promised is for you.

The gift is given to "whosoever will" receive it (Rev. 22:17). It includes the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38-39), and the faith to believe that they have been forgiven. God's forgiveness is not a temporary "pardon" which says that He doesn't mind if we sin again--no; if God forgives us a sin it means that we will never do it again.

The breakthrough insight of the 1888 message is that "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). Writing of Jesus' healing the palsied man E. J. Waggoner writes: "They made a change in the man, and that change was permanent. Even so it must be in the forgiveness of sin. The common idea is that when God forgives sin the change is in himself, and not in the man. It is thought that God simply ceases to hold anything against the one who has sinned. But this is to imply that God had a hardness against the man, which is not the case. God is not a man; he does not cherish enmity, nor harbor a feeling of revenge. It is not because he has a hard feeling in his own heart against a sinner that he forgives him, but because the sinner has something in his heart. God is all right,--the man is all

wrong; therefore God forgives the man, that he also may be all right." [1]

Forgiveness there is far more than mere pardon; forgiveness takes the sin away. Forgiveness imparts in the place of the sin (that was there) a divine-born hatred of the sin itself.

Included in that most precious gift is heart-reconciliation with the Father; He is now working to effect that reconciliation, for we read in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that "God was [is] in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

Forgiveness includes that reconciliation of heart with the Father, "in Christ." That is, we have come to believe (even if we have not yet learned to understand) that we now hate the sin itself; there is no resentment left in the heart against the Father. Even the pain and suffering of a love betrayed and lost (which embitters us) is healed by this "peace" that the Savior gives--not merely offers.

Almost the last words that Jesus spoke to "us" as He was being taken up in His ascension into heaven were: "Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36). That was not an idle greeting; He gives that peace--not merely offers it. Such "peace" is the opposite of worry or fear; in fact it's an antidote to worry and fear!

Miracle of miracles! A wounded heart is healed by the "peace" that Jesus gave as His last bequest at His ascension. Yes, there has been suffering, for the "peace" that Jesus gives would not be appreciated unless we had tasted it; "unto you it is given ... not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"Given unto [us]!" Yes! A "gift" of suffering to make you happy in the day when Jesus comes; and you're happy even now thanking Him for it, in

advance.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnote:

- [1] E. J. Waggoner, "The Power of Forgiveness," *Signs of the Times* (April 10, 1893), p. 355.

Chapter 34

The Jerusalem Council

The parallels between the Jerusalem Council and the 1888 General Conference are uncanny. Both events were prompted by controversy over what is required for salvation. Historians date the Council as taking place in A.D. 49 or as late as 51, about two decades after Christ ascended to heaven, after beginning His church on earth.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church developed out of the Millerite disappointment in 1844. About two decades later, in 1863, the church was formally organized. By 1864 Ellen White had received several visions which guided the fledgling believers into a recognized group, although light was still developing. Like the early Christian church, disagreements arose and the issues needed to be resolved to preserve unity.

Jesus had predicted that wherever the true gospel was preached, it would cause division, even within families (see Luke 12:51-53). Not surprisingly, the issue in both situations concerned keeping the "rules." Humans tend to feel self-righteous when they see others not keeping the rules as conscientiously as they think they do.

In the early Christian church there were "Judaizers" who were claiming that in order to be saved, converts to Christianity needed to be circumcised "according to the custom of Moses" (Acts 15:1, New American Standard Bible). In essence, they wanted Christians to become a kind of subset of the Jews rather than simply followers of Jesus. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary describes these dissenters as "'Jews that would not be persuaded.' The word translated 'unbelieving' has the idea of an unbelief breaking out into rebellion, and so describes well the character of these Jews

who persecuted Paul and Barnabas." [1]

The fact that they were demanding that converts become circumcised "proves what is not elsewhere plainly stated in Scripture, that Paul and Barnabas had not required their Gentile converts to be circumcised. Here opens the account of the first major controversy in the Christian church." [2]

"These apostles [Paul and Barnabas] were at the center of the dispute, for the demands of the Judaizers presented a direct condemnation of the work that these two missionaries had done ... They had proclaimed salvation through faith in Christ. Now they could not stand by silently while their converts were told that the acceptance of God's grace through faith was not sufficient, but that external rites must be performed in order to obtain salvation. ... The fact that the early church referred the vexing question of circumcision to a council of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem is a highly significant precedent for church organization. It stands against the theory that a final decision in ecclesiastical matters should be made by one man acting as an autocrat." [3] The final decision made by the brethren at Jerusalem apparently was unanimous (Acts 15:22).

How does this parallel the General Conferences held in the late 1880s and 1890s? Like the early Christian church, Seventh-day Adventists were winning converts with their message that the return of Christ was soon. We also were teaching how important God's moral law remained as a standard of Christian living, and the role of the Sabbath in the last days. The Adventist evangelists easily won the arguments against the need for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath rather than Sunday. As a recognized entity, we had organized and were guided by the special revelations given by God through Ellen White.

Paul was the special messenger to the early Christians through whom God gave revelations. Both the Adventists and the early church began by

preaching the joyful gospel of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Both began to experience criticism and fights for supremacy several years after the beginning of their existence.

Ironically, the early Christians' issue was whether circumcision should be required by honoring the laws given by God through Moses. The Adventists' issue was whether keeping that same law was required for salvation. Both groups sought to add an act done by the believer to merit salvation. In both situations, the messengers of the Lord strongly opposed such a perversion of the gospel but were persistently challenged by those who were pushing their own agendas.

"During the summer of 1884, E. J. Waggoner wrote ten articles on the law and gospel and their relation to one another. In his September 11, 1894 Signs article he dealt more specifically with the law in Galatians and departed from the accepted Adventist position that the law in Galatians referred to the ceremonial law. It was during the 1884-1885 school year that E. J. Waggoner began to present the same views at Healdsburg College. Although some were pleased with Waggoner's writing and teaching, others became very concerned. Uriah Smith, Chief Editor of the Review, and G. I. Butler, President of the General Conference, were the most outspoken in their concerns." [4]

President Butler pressured Ellen White to settle the matter, expecting her to "'call our good Signs brethren to an account' at the upcoming [1886] General Conference ... for their 'minority' views, and their 'much vaunted doctrine of justification by faith.'" Later, W. C. White remembered that "there has been a desire on the part of some, that Elds. Waggoner and Jones should be condemned unheard." [5]

Ellen White finally recommended that the matter be openly discussed, which was to take place some two years later at the 1888 General

Conference. This was wise advice, but unlike the Jerusalem Council did not achieve unity on the issue. Did the church accept the message discussed at the 1888 Conference?

"However, the important issue is not whether the church accepted the message. Ellen White says that "Satan succeeded in shutting [it] away from our people, in a great measure" (cf. Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 234, 235; 1896). The church never had a fair chance to consider it undistorted and unopposed. The issue is whether the leadership accepted it." [6]

For many years our church has based many arguments in favor of the seventh-day Sabbath on the demands of the Ten Commandment law. We rarely hear preaching or teaching on the other unique tenant of our faith, which is God's solution to the sin problem, collectively referred to as the "cleansing of the sanctuary." We are in danger of becoming a single-issue denomination with most of our people thinking the Ten Commandment Sabbath is the church's only real issue. (There are other denominations who believe as we do regarding the Sabbath and the state of the dead).

The message given in 1888 was a unique understanding of the heart change God wants to give us who are willing to consent. Once we realize salvation is indeed a free gift for us to accept, the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts a cleansing that is thorough and genuine, not us going through the motions of keeping God's law.

"Israel had been told to build the tabernacle that the Lord 'may dwell among them' (Exodus 25:8). But they had come to consider that what really counted was the doing of the sundry services. This same mind-set of the Jews can be our peril. If we merely transfer what they did on earth to a similar routine carried out in heaven and forget that sin is the problem, we remain under the old covenant without hope. They failed to understand that the services had been given because of the sin problem. God and sin could

not abide together. One or the other had to go. Thus there was war in heaven and thus it became evident that the real sin is the will to exterminate God."
[7]

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

- [1] The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 295.
- [2] Ibid., p.305.
- [3] Ibid., p. 306.
- [4] Ron Duffield, *The Return of the Latter Rain: A Historical Review of Seventh-day Adventist History From 1844 Through 1891*, p. 60 (2010 ed.).
- [5] Ibid., p. 62.
- [6] Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, *1888 Re-examined*, p. 26 (1987); emphasis in the original.
- [7] Donald K. Short, "Then Shall the Sanctuary Be Cleansed," p. 49 (CFI ed., 2018); emphasis in the original.

Chapter 35

The Second Missionary Journey

Paul, God's faithful servant, suffered a humiliating rebuke in his evangelism crusade in the great city of Athens. He made the mistake of trying to match philosophy with philosophy, trying to meet the Athenian scholars on their own ground. The result: near failure in soul-winning, although a few did respond.

When he came to the immoral city of Corinth, he says he "determined not to know anything among [them], save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The Holy Spirit, "through the grace" of God, moved the apostle of the Lord to urge all of us ("everyone that is among you") "to think soberly" (Rom. 12:3).

Thinking that way is the essence of life on this great Day of Atonement in world history--just before the final judgment and the second coming of Jesus. Selfish fun and comedy are inappropriate now in this special "time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). That means that "everyone" whose heart is moved by that "grace" will find that worldly pleasures and comedy do not satisfy the deep yearnings that the Holy Spirit has placed in our hearts just now.

"Atonement" means in very simple words, "at-one-with," or reconciliation of heart with God; and we can know God only through knowing Christ, for He alone can reveal God to us so we can understand the Father. That means that one interest is henceforth paramount with us: the "Christ and Him crucified" idea that possessed Paul when he came from Athens to Corinth (1 Cor. 2:1, 2).

"God hath dealt to every one [of us] the measure of [genuine] faith,"

adds Paul, so we can think seriously, "soberly," in a world of pleasure seeking (Rom. 12:3). It's a gift of that much more abounding grace of God. We repent in behalf of those who do not know about this Day of Atonement.

In going through the four Gospels, only once did Jesus say we "must" experience something, and then it turns out to be something we can't "do." He told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). And in only one other place in the New Testament are we told we "must" do something, and that is Hebrews 11:6 where we are told, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, ..." And when the jailer asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" they answered, "Believe ..." (Acts 16:30). Were they teaching the heresy of "only-believism"?

The reality is, John 3:16 does not list all the things we must "do" in order to "have everlasting life." It plainly says, "Believe." So, was Jesus teaching "only-believism"?

Then, when Hebrews 11:6 says we "must believe" it is stating the one and only thing Scripture tells us we "must" do. "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). We can't force the Bible to teach salvation by faith and by works; it teaches salvation "by grace through faith," "faith which works" (Eph. 2:8, 9; Gal. 5:6).

Finally, when Jesus says we "must be born again," He is not talking about a program of works. Can't be; nobody can "born" himself--or give birth to himself. We must be born, passive voice of the verb. And who does the conceiving and "giving birth"? Jesus says in John 3, verse 8, as you can't tell where the wind comes from or goes, "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." It is He who conceives in you the new life and gives birth to the new heart; you welcome the new birth, you let it happen, you stop the abortion practice you've been doing all your life. Call it cooperation if you wish, but please don't think of it as being 50 percent your own Saviour. You cooperate

by letting Him do His blessed will in you. And when all is done at last, to Him alone will you give all the glory.

It's shocking but true: as you read the New Testament, there is only one thing that we are told we must do: and that is "believe." It's clear in John 3:7-16, and in Heb. 11:6, as well as Acts 16:30, 31. And the New Testament does not teach the heresy of what is known as "only-believism," that is, that a mental assent and confession is all that is necessary--without obedience. Romans 10:10 says that "with the heart [we] believeth ... unto salvation."

And if you believe with the heart, there is certainly a change in the life that leads you to obey all of God's commandments. Put all those texts together and let them speak, and it becomes clear that the Bible meaning of the word "believe" is quite different from the usual idea held by Roman Catholic and Protestant evangelicals. To "believe" is not an exercise of selfishness, like buying a lottery ticket in the hope of winning a bonanza.

But Bible faith is not centered in winning something, even if it is a heavenly fortune instead of an earthly jackpot. Bible faith is a heart appreciation of the love of the Father in giving "His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

According to Jesus, this is the one thing you must do. But someone says, wait a minute--doesn't He say that if "you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15)? Yes, but please notice: the motive is love, not fear or hope of reward! And Jesus prefaces that remark with this: "believe ... in Me" (vs. 1). He is talking about receiving the atonement, the reconciliation (Rom. 5:9, 10). Paul pleads with us, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Why, and how? The next verse answers: because Christ was "made to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

Let your small heart contemplate what happened on that cross; then as

David says, your heart will be "enlarged" (Psalm 119:32). In such faith is everlasting life. And the message about it today is--"the third angel's message in verity" (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, April 1, 1890).

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 36

The Third Missionary Journey

If some pagan who had never heard of Christ or His gospel should have heard the Apostle Paul preach at Ephesus, his heart would have been warmed. And unless that soul had resisted the seeking grace of Christ, he would have been won to the faith. Paul's evangelism in Ephesians did play a large part in the phenomenal spread of the Christian faith in that early century.

And now today, the Good News Paul preached is more up-to-date than tomorrow's media news because it pulsates with the life of Christ's urgent message He wants to go to the world. Here is that glorious gospel which "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

We live in these last days of earth's history when the world's great High Priest is doing something never done in previous ages--preparing a people to be ready for His second coming. Our study will follow Him into His Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary where He is accomplishing this very special work.

The water of life flowing out of Paul's heart comes from a hidden spring deep in his soul. His work is incomparably greater than that of any mere theologian or philosopher. He loves people as Christ loves them! He specializes first in declaring the objective gospel--what Christ accomplished for the world even before we were born; then he zeroes in on the subjective gospel--how this objective truth of what Christ did for us motivates us subjectively to devote our lives to Him.

All the great cities of the Roman Empire were much the same as

Ephesus. Pagan people were bored with life except for sensual pleasures of gourmet food, alcoholic drink, violence, and sex. They would feel right at home if they could be resurrected and set down in our modern cities with our sports, games, Internet, and TV amusements. As a public evangelist, Paul was challenged by these pagan people to win their attention, and then to win their hearts. He met the challenge with the message of the cross of Jesus.

When Paul pleads with the Corinthians, "we pray [implore] you in Christ's [behalf], be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20), we know that was also the burden of his heart in writing Ephesians. Now he is appealing beyond Corinth and Ephesus to all the people out there in this world.

Simply substitute modern amenities, clothing, and language, and Ephesus is transformed into a modern New York, Tokyo, or Beijing. People are identical. There are the poor serfs or slaves who today are technically "free" but they are still caught in dreary boredom; there are the wealthy, as always, obsessed in making more money, and there are the masses in love with violence and sports. The ancient and modern worlds are virtually identical!

Ephesus had its huge amphitheater and arena, as modern cities have today. Archaeologists have unearthed the ancient theater which seated about 25,000 people bent on the same pleasures many gravitate to today. The temple of Diana was the center of idol worship in the city. Four times the size of the Acropolis in Athens, it had columns 66 feet high, as impressive to the ancients as St. Peter's is to us today. Huge crowds attended the feasts of the goddess whose statue was believed to have descended from heaven.

Further in presenting a challenge to the lonely evangelist of Christ, Ephesus boasted the great banking business of Asia Minor because the worship of Diana fueled the economic life of the city. Let Paul touch the economy, and will they ever hate him!

On the north side of the city stood the stadium where the races and gladiatorial combats were held. The people were drawn to watch men kill each other. The more violence the better the people loved it (aren't even our video games often based on a secret fascination for killing people?). The Odeum in Ephesus was another theater seating 1500. Self-indulgence and pleasure were all the people knew to live for. Can you imagine--prostitution was a religious duty! How could Paul ever get through with the gospel effectively to people such as these!

Paul's gospel was an inescapable equation: all belong in the grave! All would be dead if One had not died for them, instead of them. That puts "all men" under a common obligation, and Paul simply recognized the truth of it.

From the day of his conversion on that road to Damascus, he has reckoned that he does not belong to himself. He has no idea that self-sacrifice is involved on his part; he deserves no compliments or praise. What he realizes he deserves is only the grave, so everything he has that is better than a grave has to be a gift of God's grace occasioning joy and gratitude.

Paul inspired and trained other fellow-laborers in Ephesus. None were jealous of him and he never shows the slightest envy of their success. For once, in the story of his labors in Ephesus, we see a clear demonstration of what the special love of Christ, known as agape, did for a group of workers. There was Apollos, himself "mighty in the Scriptures" and "an eloquent man," but Paul worked with him smoothly and in love (Acts 18:24). There were Priscilla and Aquila who were also imbued with the same spirit that motivated Paul (vs. 26).

Apollos was from Alexandria, the second most important city in the Roman Empire. Highly educated, a Jew converted to the baptism of John the Baptist, he was an eloquent preacher. But he knew nothing of the baptism of

the Holy Spirit and he needed to be instructed in the way of Jesus.

Then dear Aquila and Priscilla, in a kind and courteous way, told him what he needed to know, and thank God, Apollos listened! Sometimes we ministers may not be deficient in the same way that Apollos was, but there are also empty places in our knowledge. The Lord then sends someone to correct us and instruct us and fill in the gaps.

But we are painfully aware that sometimes our dear ministering brethren in a past era were not like Apollos: they may have been "mighty in the Scriptures" and could argue, and like him had gaps in their understanding so that "the Lord in His great mercy sent" in 1888 His messengers (A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner) to fill in, but unlike Apollos they were not ready to listen and learn. In a great degree, history has told us, they resisted and even rejected the light that God would have them accept.

Now we have come collectively to the very end of time, and where "we" have corporately failed in past times we must now overcome. Time is getting short.

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 37

Arrest in Jerusalem

One can easily imagine how it must have felt for Paul to be among his own brethren when they repeatedly refused to understand the good news he was trying to give to them. What a frustrating situation! No matter how he changed the way he approached his presentation of the truth, it slammed up against the brick wall of preconceived opinions (Acts 13:42-45; 14:2; 19; 15:1, 2; 17:5, 6; 32; etc.). Then along comes a trusted confidant who advised him to "just compromise a little, no one will think it matters in the long view." How often are we tempted to compromise truth for the sake of convenience or political correctness? We see it taking place all around us in the church today.

Because of pride and the stubbornness of preconceived opinions, compromise and its resulting confusion have plagued God's church from the beginning, and will continue until finally a faithful few will wake up, wipe the fog from their spiritual glasses and repent of their Laodicea blindness.

"Because of a failure to appreciate the 1888 message, far back in the 1890s there was a tendency to confuse Quaker author Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* with true righteousness by faith, (cf. General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pp. 358, 359). ... Through the decades there have been prominent examples of this confusion over Roman Catholic concepts of piety and the 'interior life.'" [1]

Most of us have heard the adage: "a drop of arsenic will poison the whole cup of tea." Several events in our history have contributed their drops of arsenic to our collective thinking. The "drop of arsenic" that the Jewish Christians were attempting to add was that circumcision, or any "works of

the law" had merit.

"It is a grave mistake on the part of those who are children of God to seek to bridge the gulf that separates the children of light from the children of darkness by yielding principle, by compromising the truth." [2]

Even though the early church, under the power of the Holy Spirit's work on their hearts, in its first "general conference" session in Jerusalem, had come to a consensus on the issue of the "how" of salvation-through faith alone (see Acts 15:20-29), it remained a major point of dissension between the Jewish and Gentile believers. The Jewish followers of Jesus had been admonished to not put the burden of circumcision (or any "works") upon the Gentile converts.

Ancient Egyptians, Ethiopians, Syrians, and Phoenicians all practiced circumcision. Why did God command Abraham to circumcise the males in his household? The purpose of God was not to mimic the pagans, but to put a spiritual purpose on a common practice. God's intent was to forever remind Abraham and his descendants that the works of the flesh can not fulfill the promise of God, and in fact, will produce only more unrighteousness. Abraham listened to Sarah and thought he could produce the "child of promise" through a slave woman. Just as his descendants did at Sinai when they thought that through their own efforts they could do "all the Lord commanded," Abraham rashly took the whole responsibility upon himself to produce the child of promise. That one miscalculation resulted in a disaster that we are still experiencing to this day.

From the entrance of sin into this world, for the most part, mankind has depended upon "self" to create a shield from sin's results. Adam's nakedness was covered with the work of his own hands in fashioning a fig-leaf garment. Cain thought that the works of his hands in tilling the soil should have been sufficient as a sin offering. Abraham thought that he was man enough to

produce the promised child without exercising faith in God's creative power-just give him a fertile woman and he could accomplish the fact.

"Whoever trusts in himself is worshiping the works of his own hands instead of God, just as truly as does anyone who makes and bows down to a graven image." [3] But "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:4). "If we worked for righteousness, we would be exercising only our own sinful human nature, and so would get no nearer to righteousness, but farther from it." "So, then, we see that relying on the works of the law does not mean that one is doing the law." [4]

By the time Christ came to our world, the Jews had lost sight of the true meaning of circumcision. It had become nothing more than a religious tradition, a rite signifying entrance into the tribe of Israel. They supposed that it set them apart as God's "chosen people." They assumed that circumcision and the "works of the law" made them a special people in the eyes of God. But "God gave circumcision as a sign of faith in Christ. The Jews perverted it into a substitute for faith." [5]

The apostle Paul's referral to circumcision in his letter to the Galatians and elsewhere, was used "as the symbol of all kinds of 'work' done by men with the hope of obtaining righteousness. It is 'the works of the flesh,' as opposed to the Spirit." "That which was to be only the sign of an already existing fact was taken by subsequent generations as the means of establishing the fact." [6]

The argument in the early church, as it still is for many today, is the "how" of salvation. "The question is how to obtain righteousness-salvation from sin--and the inheritance that comes with it. The fact is that it can be obtained only by faith-by receiving Christ into the heart and allowing Him to live His life in us." [7]

Genesis 15:6 tells us that Abraham "believed in the LORD; and He counted it [Abraham's faith in God's promise] unto him for righteousness." It was only when Sarah also surrendered herself and came to live by faith in the promise of God, that she was able to conceive-when she finally believed that God was faithful to fulfill His own promise to them. "By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the One who had promised was faithful. Therefore from one man--in fact, from one as good as dead--came offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as innumerable as the grains of sand by the seashore" (Heb. 11:11, 12, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

God gave Abraham circumcision as a sign of the fact that "we have nothing and are nothing, and He has everything and is everything and gives everything." [8] Circumcision "had a special meaning to Abraham, continually reminding him of his failure when he tried by means of the flesh to fulfill God's promise. The record of it serves the same purpose for us. It shows that the 'flesh profiteth nothing' and is not therefore to be depended on." [9]

It should be forever settled that mankind's attempts to produce righteousness through any amount of "works of the law" can only result in a self-centered sense of achievement assumed to merit reward. Such has been the idea of paganism from the building of the tower of Babel. However, the biblical truth is vastly different. "If you would gather together everything that is good and holy and noble and lovely in man and then present the subject to the angels of God as acting a part in the salvation of the human soul or in merit, the proposition would be rejected as treason." [10]

Many today argue that "faith is my work"-it is human effort put forth in believing the promise of God to save us from sin. Is this true? "There is danger in regarding justification by faith as placing merit on faith. When you

take the righteousness of Christ as a free gift you are justified freely through the redemption of Christ. What is faith? ... It is an assent of the understanding to God's words which binds the heart in willing consecration and service to God, Who gave the understanding, Who moved on the heart, Who first drew the mind to view Christ on the cross of Calvary. Faith is rendering to God the intellectual powers, abandonment of the mind and will to God, and making Christ the only door to enter into the kingdom of heaven." [11]

Please understand what this says: It is God who gives understanding; it is God who moves the heart and draws the mind to the grasp the reality of what took place on Calvary's cross. Like Abraham, all we can do is surrender our will and say, "Amen"-we believe and agree with God that salvation is all of Him and none of us.

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

- [1] Robert J. Wieland, *The Knocking At The Door*, p. 73 (1983).
- [2] Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1894.
- [3] Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 94; CFI ed. (2018).*
- [4] *Ibid.*, p. 56, emphasis in original.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 110, emphases in original.
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- [8] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- [10] Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 24.
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Chapter 38

Confinement in Caesarea

Living happily ever after is for fairy tales, not for apostles or anyone who believes or teaches the genuine gospel. Historians tell us that Paul died in his early to mid-sixties. With all the physical abuse he endured throughout his life from enemies of the gospel, he was probably suffering the long-term effects of that plus the usual physical and mental problems of aging. Why didn't he gracefully acknowledge the inevitable and turn the ministry over to the younger men who were being groomed to fill his shoes?

Those who have experienced the joy of the 1888 message see many who have no hope because they have been taught a different idea of the gospel. Like Paul, we are "compelled" to tell what God has done for us and the whole world. Right now, many serious-minded people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a great burden for our churches, especially for the youth. It's a helpless feeling when we see so many leaving. We hope and pray that somehow the Lord will find a way to bring them back. We fear that people who have never heard the genuine gospel based on what Christ has already done for them (see Romans 5), may never return to a church that doesn't preach that gospel clearly.

On Sunday our Sabbath School lesson (page 97) refers to Acts 24:16 where "Paul said that he strove always to have a 'conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'" Two questions are asked: "What does that mean?" and "What, if anything, would you have to change in order to say the same thing?" Such questions can plunge people into genuine despair if they think they have to do whatever it takes to have a conscience "void of offence." The more we think this, the more we struggle to please God. We look within ourselves and are tempted to give up trying something that is

impossible. What we need to do is give up what we think is our right to fight the devil.

"There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ, --the spirit of unselfish love and labor for others, --you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely. [1]

Too many people work at resisting sin and the devil in order to have the "conscience void of offense." Over and over they beg God to give them the strength to resist until they finally give up. By God's grace, they fall at the foot of the cross and give up the battle to resist, and concentrate on the battle to believe what God, in the life of Jesus, has already done for you. This is a daily matter. We can never forget we are sinners, and daily need the grace of God. "And He [said] to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:23, New American Standard Bible).

"The reason for Jesus' command to take up our cross daily is the fact that the 'old man' [see Romans 7] who was crucified yesterday reappears in a new form today. His true identity is never fully apprehended by the sincere believer.

"What we sense as 'self' today may be correct, and our experience of renouncing and crucifying self today may be genuine. But each succeeding victory is that of a battle and not the war itself. The 'old man' reappears in a

higher, more cleverly disguised form daily. Hence the need, as Jesus says, for bearing the cross daily. ...

"Not only will the cross be carried here in this life daily, but even in heaven's eternity the principle of self-renunciation symbolized by the cross will motivate the behavior of the redeemed, while the cross of Christ will remain their study. The book of Revelation presents to us that after sin is no more, Christ will still bear His title as the Crucified One--the 'Lamb.' ...The love so amply demonstrated on the cross will ever be recognized as the basis of God's government, and will flow out to all the universe in unending streams of light and life and gladness.

"Only as the selfless love of Christ on the cross reigns in every heart will it be certain that sin can never appear again. Should the love of self ever arise in any heart in the universe, the very essence of sin would be back again, and the whole sad war in the universe would have to be repeated. Thank God, that will not happen! 'Affliction will not rise up a second time' (Nahum 1:9). And in bearing our cross daily now, we are beginning to live out that principle of eternal life." [2]

It is only by dying daily, to that "old man" self that we can examine our consciences and say they are without offense to God. We may be helpless to "fix" ourselves and our conscience, but Christ is not helpless and He has been given all power to bring us into right standing. Our job is to believe He will do that for us.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly according as God had dealt to every man the measure of faith.' Rom. 12:3. This text indicates that the greater a man's faith is, the less will he think of himself. As the apostle expresses it, he will 'think soberly.' Pride is intoxication. Just as alcohol stimulates a man without building him up, ... so

a man, to use a common expression, 'loses his head' when he gets to hunting for the good traits in his character. ...

"Great diseases call for great remedies; the weaker a man is, the more aid will have to be given him. So the more the man feels his sinful condition, the more faith in Christ will he exercise. Therefore it is true that great faith on the part of any person is an evidence that that person feels that he is by nature very weak and sinful, and that without Christ he is nothing. ... It is only when Christians lose their sense of unworthiness, and begin to look upon themselves with complacency, that they lose faith." [3]

Paul was a great apostle in the work of spreading the gospel, but he never placed confidence in the flesh. "If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Phil. 3:4-7, NASB).

May we join Paul in thinking of ourselves soberly which will result in a clear conscience while we continue spreading the Good News.

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 67, 68.

[2] Robert J. Wieland, *In Search of the Cross*, pp. 51, 52; Glad Tidings ed., 1999.

[3] Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 175-177; Glad Tidings ed., 1999.

Chapter 39

Journey to Rome

Soon after his arrival in Rome, following his policy of going to the Jews first, Paul invited the Jewish leaders to hear him state his innocence and explain his arrest (Acts 28:17-21). His purpose was to create an atmosphere of truth that allowed him to share the gospel. The results were mixed: some believed, and some did not (vs. 24). Paul then took the good news to the Gentiles. Paul had a "big idea": that the gospel would unite Jews and Gentiles.

Here's another "big idea" too big for reality: "Preach so that the people can catch hold of big ideas." [1] Can the teaching of Seventh-day Adventists electrify the world? Can it hit the front pages of newspapers and get on the evening news? Can it "lighten the earth with glory" (Rev. 18:1, 2)? Can we be what the Lord told Abraham his descendants would be--"a blessing" to all nations? Are we somebody important-to-be?

The answer has to be an unswerving Yes!

Such a "big idea" does not convert the world--that won't happen, we know, but for sure it's a proclamation of truth so clear that it acts upon warring populations as that "other angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2). "With a loud voice" he commands the four angels to hold their four winds of warfare, hatred, and strife, until God "seal[s His] servants. ... in their foreheads" (vss. 1-3). (An "angel," remember, = a "most precious" message.) Don't let the message be muffled--there may be tragic consequences.

The sealing message has a direct effect on the "holding" of terrorism and

international strife. Two world wars and numerous others, for example, can testify to negligence in proclaiming that special message which prepares a people for the close of probation--the sealing message. "In a great degree" it eluded us. Our God-given task is specific: prepare a people for the second coming of Christ and do it in this generation. If we will do so, the Lord has promised He will do His part: He will tell those "four angels," "Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold!" their "four winds" until the sealing work is completed. [2] This should happen now, not wait another century for us to wake up and do it.

During the "two whole years" (Acts 28:30) that Paul spent in house arrest during his imprisonment in Rome, he wrote the four "prison letters": Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians; all of which mention his incarceration.

The theme of Ephesians and Colossians is that God's "mystery,"--the sealing message--and the salvation of Jew and Gentile in the same body (Col. 3:11, 15; Eph. 2:16; 3:1-6), has been revealed through the death of Jesus on the cross. In Ephesians, Paul states that redemption and reconciliation took place "in His flesh" (Eph. 2:15).

What does Paul's letter to the Ephesians have to do with the God's sealing work at the end-time?

Much, because Ephesians 3 in particular is concerned with God's people reaching the zenith of character development which means being "filled with all the fullness of God" (vs. 19). That's not perfection of the flesh (which is a heresy!) but Christlikeness of character--manifested in the church as a body. That's why Ephesians belongs with Daniel and Revelation; it's a message for the last days proclaimed by the Bride-to-be of Christ. This idea of something happening in the church, which is also "by the church" (Eph. 3:10)--repentance in and of the church as a body. Long said to be impossible, it has to come, and it will.

That means the sealing message is not proclaimed by a handful of zealots scattered almost invisible in the church, but it's by the corporate body of the church. It means the church will at last be united in their understanding of the message! In other words, it's God's purpose that the entire body of the church be united in their heart-appreciation for the sacrifice of Christ as no corporate body in history has been so united, so grown-up in their understanding of the atonement. At last, they comprehend something--what it cost the Son of God to save this world. And that constrains them.

What Sunday-keeping churches just can't see.

Paul's prayer is that we might comprehend the grand dimensions of this agape-love of Christ (Eph. 3:14-19). It's no fault of theirs they can't see it--the false doctrine of natural immortality they inherited from Romanism (and eventually paganism) hides their eyes from "comprehending" the kind of death Christ died on His cross. We have yet to become united in our understanding of what happened there, but the Holy Spirit is working. We have a unique new covenant message to proclaim to "all nations." It will arrest the attention of every honest soul in the world.

Was Paul's gospel self-propagating? It seems that it did have its own built-in power pack. It motivated people even to the point of being thought extravagantly zealous: "If we are out of our mind ... [or] in our right mind, ... Christ's love [agape] compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves" (2 Cor. 5:13-15, New International Version).

In other words, they sensed a motivation fueled by something special they saw in the sacrifice of Christ. Once you grasped what had happened, you just couldn't sit still. The tongue-tied had to talk, and the timid grew bold

(Isa. 32:4; Zech. 12:8). You saw the Messiah to be the second Adam; He died "for all." That meant--if He had not died, you would be dead. Since He became corporately one with the human race, "all died" in Him; from now on nobody could go on "living for themselves." You could no longer think that you belonged to yourself, or that anything you possessed was yours. With one divine sword-stroke, the Gordian knot of human self-centered concern was cut. The cross did it.

A new purpose for living took over.

If you believed this self-propagating gospel, you just had to live "for Him who died" for you, and it wasn't fear or hope-of-reward that moved you. Materialism, sensuality, all self-centered motivations, were transcended by this phenomenal new reason for living. You saw yourself eternally in debt to the Son of God. And the idea caught on, because there were honest hearts everywhere. Jews and Gentiles came out of nowhere, ready to respond.

This understanding of what the cross meant first burst on people's minds at Pentecost. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," cried Peter. "[Ye] killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. ... Repent ye therefore and be converted" (Acts 3:14, 15, 19). And they did repent, and they were converted. "The truth in agape" compelled multitudes to respond--3000 in one day.

This was "the former rain." Today we await "the latter rain." That self-propagating gospel at Pentecost accompanied Christ's beginning work in heaven as High Priest. Now His closing work in the cosmic Day of Atonement will be accompanied by a fully developed "everlasting gospel" that will "lighten the earth with glory." The same cross-exalting motivation will fuel that final burst of soul-winning.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] cf. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 169.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 38.

Chapter 40

Creation and Fall

Not a few are deeply concerned about disunity in the church. Leadership through the mainstream church media are appealing for tolerance. Liberal media say the church is "facing its worst threat to unity in many decades." A church consisting of 20+ million adherents worldwide of such diversity might be expected to face challenges.

We are told that it's man's fault that disunity with God was welcomed to earth. It is God who seeks to bring healing to the rift through His Good News.

But every beautiful truth that God teaches us in His Bible has been twisted and distorted by the master enemy, Satan, to bring about disunity among God's people. Satan's clever deceptions have even been injected into the teaching of God's new covenant (Thursday's lesson).

The truth as the Bible teaches it is so simple that a child can easily grasp it. God's 1888 "messengers" saw it clearly from the Word. When God Himself makes a "covenant," it is always a simple, straightforward promise on His part. No gimmicks, no small print, no "bargains" struck, no "ifs" that can be used to get Him off the hook so He can wriggle out of keeping His promise. In fact, when God makes a "covenant," He goes the second mile and swears an oath that puts His own life and His throne in pawn if He doesn't do what He promises (see Gen. 15:7-18; Heb. 6:13-20). That promise of God was made to Abraham, and confirmed by His solemn oath. God would give him the whole earth for "an everlasting possession" together with the righteousness necessary to inherit it.

When the Lord promised Abraham, He stipulated no "bargain" or "transaction" terms. It was a give-and-take relationship--God would do all the giving, and Abraham would do all the taking. And how did Abraham "take" the blessing? Totally by faith. Abraham "believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; remember, we are Abraham's "children"). "Abraham believed" His promises--a heart-melting appreciation of the love of God that has redeemed humanity at the cross. Such faith is the kind that is alive, which "works." It reconciles alienated hearts to God and therefore at the same time reconciles their hearts to His holy law.

But for nearly 4000 years both Abraham and his descendants have twisted and distorted this simple good news. Abraham proposed to God that he help Him out of His difficulty by adopting Eliezer, a slave, to be his "heir" (15:2-4). God said No! Then Sarah, embittered because she couldn't get pregnant, proposed that she help God out of His difficulty by adopting a slave-girl's son from Abraham as her own (16:1-4). Again God said No! (17:1-19). The Lord insisted that everything would be His doing 100 percent.

And here is where the battle has raged these thousands of years. We are all "born in sin," inheriting a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5; Rom. 7:14-17). It's easy not to believe. Faith humbles our hearts! The result? We ourselves have invented the "old covenant," our promises to God. Somehow we must help save ourselves!

Don't you wish when you were younger you had understood that God's great promises to Abraham were to you also. Nobody told us! Our whole life would have been different. All that God promised Abraham was precisely what worries us. (Teens are the most worried people on earth.) We wanted to be "a great nation," that is, we want to be "somebody." We don't want to be just a number in humanity. We want to live for a purpose, to amount to something.

Are we sinful? Of course we are! But the desire to be "somebody" is also God-given; and He wants every person to hear His promise, "I will make of you somebody important!"

We also need to hear Him tell us, "I will bless thee." That will lift a load of fear from our hearts. And yes, we want to hear Him tell us that He will make our name "great" in some meaningful way. We don't want to be a glob of jelly, a "blah" person. We want to be "someone" in others' eyes!

And yes, sinful though we are, we do indeed dream of God doing for us what He promised to do for Abraham, "And thou shalt be a blessing." From our dawn of consciousness we dream of becoming something for God. We don't know how, but we want to be a useful person in God's great plan for the world. Oh, we can be so happy if we know that all along God is promising us these wonderful things He promised Abraham!

All seven of those fantastic promises in Genesis 12:2, 3 will rejoice our hearts if only we know that God is telling us all that! We can stand taller and walk more sprightly when we know His promises are for us. We can study better, develop our abilities more efficiently.

And best of all, if we know that God is promising us that someday we will fellowship with Christ in "all families of the earth being blessed," that by His grace we will be an agent He can use in some little but meaningful way to convey that "blessing" everywhere we will go--oh, the new covenant will make all the difference in our thinking and lives. Don't you think it will go a long way in healing disunity in the church?

Now, how about passing on those new covenant promises to someone else?

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 41

Causes of Disunity

How people in a church can truly believe the same thing (be in unity) is important, because Jesus said that the only way the world can be brought to believe in Him is when His followers "all may be one, ... that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21). Something He calls "Your truth" is the only thing that will unite them (vs. 17). Paul calls it "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:5, 14). The success or failure of Christ's mission for the world therefore depends on that "truth" bringing His people who profess to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" into one (Rev. 14:12).

Take the problem of Genesis 1. Christ and His apostles accepted that "the truth of the gospel" required sincere, honest hearts to believe that God created the earth in six literal days. People who insist they are equally sincere understand the idea of six literal days to be ancient mythology; science makes such belief naive, they say.

In a church that has for more than 150 years stood for creation in six days, a literal reading of Genesis 1, 2, etc., there are now powerful voices advocating evolution. There are divisions about women's ordination, about music in church worship services, and on. And for many, "the blessed hope" of the soon second coming of Christ is receding into the background, and a materialistic earthly lifestyle is taking its place.

Then there's the problem of Jesus Himself. When He became incarnate, did He "take" the sinless nature of the unfallen Adam, thus breaking the genetic line of His descent from the real Adam? Or did He accept the working of the great law of heredity and enter the stream of humanity by

taking our fallen, sinful nature yet living a sinless life? Here again is disunity; the assumption is that unity is impossible. Or is it?

Why does disunion seem to flourish so? And how can the church enlighten the earth with glory if it is in a divided state? And what can bring the true unity Christ prayed for?

There is a solution. If God is real and if His Bible is true, it follows that God has a solution for the problem of disunity. God will bring His people into unity. That which to doubters today seems impossible, the Holy Spirit will accomplish. He brought the disunited eleven apostles into unity before the Day of Pentecost. They were "with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). That was "the former rain," and the "latter rain" is promised to be even greater. God cannot use force to accomplish it. For Him to burn down the churches or strike them with lightning, wouldn't solve the root problem.

Ephesians tells us the solution: for those "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," is the message of agape(4:14, 15). Such a message proclaims what Christ accomplished, the pure biblical truth of justification by faith. Christ has promised solemnly that if He is lifted up on His cross, that is, if His agape is clearly proclaimed, He "will draw all peoples to [Himself]," and that of course is perfect unity (John 12:32). Let the leadership of a church that is being fragmented receive that "most precious message" of Christ's righteousness; the miracle of unity is as certain as day follows night.

Is it possible for Seventh-day Adventist theologians to originate today among themselves a message that again would be the "beginning" or continuation of the latter rain and the loud cry? Must we re-study and accept the 1888 message before we can recover the latter rain which has been so long delayed?

If the Lord was capable of sending "a most precious message" to His people through the 1888 "messengers," Elders E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, He is surely capable of sending such a message through any chosen instrument He may select today. But problems arise immediately!

Why hasn't He already done so? Why the long delay of decade after decade?

Again, it is no secret that many of our theologians and ministers claim to be preaching "righteousness by faith" accurately and clearly. Why does it seem that rarely two of them can agree? Jones and Waggoner maintained a remarkable harmony in their message, even when separated from each other by thousands of miles, for about a decade or more.

Is it reasonable that the Lord would grant additional light to His people while they continue to neglect or even despise light that He has already given them? We don't know for sure; but one thing is sure, it would be absolutely contrary to His manner of working in past ages. For example, we could as well argue that He should send the Jews a new "Messiah" while they continue to reject the One He already sent them two thousand years ago. Most of us would agree that the Jews at the Wailing Wall praying for the Messiah to come would do well to study the New Testament documents that tell how the Lord already sent Him to them!

If the message of justification by faith as taught by the 16th century Reformers is "the third angel's message in verity," why didn't the Lord in 1888 refer our people to them instead of sending the message He did send by Jones and Waggoner?

One thing is crystal clear: The Lord Jesus Christ calls upon the "angel of the church of the Laodiceans" to "repent." What can such "repentance" mean for the remnant church? "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as

we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." [1]

What can bring unity to the remnant church? Some say it is impossible; the best we can hope for is a "shaking," and disunity until probation closes.

It seems impossible that the church could ever be united on teachings of "righteousness by faith" as advanced by Sunday-keeping Reformers and theologians. Not only do we find almost hopeless disagreement among themselves, but we also find serious cautions expressed by Ellen G. White concerning undue confidence in the Reformers' positions. While it is true that "the great doctrine of justification by faith" was "clearly taught by Luther," it is obvious that the Lord's servant means by that statement that he taught it "clearly" for his day and under his circumstances. Elsewhere she makes clear that Luther did not preach "the everlasting gospel" in the setting of "the last days." "This message [the first angel's] is a part of the gospel which could be proclaimed only in the last days, for only then would it be true that the hour of judgment had come." [2]

But what the 16th century Reformers never did, Jones and Waggoner went on to do. They built upon this foundation a grand edifice of biblical truth that is unique and distinctly Seventh-day Adventist as a completion of the Reformation begun long ago. They developed a message of righteousness by faith parallel to and consistent with the unique Adventist truth of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

"The message of Christ's righteousness" that is to lighten the earth with glory is ministered from the Most Holy Apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ our High Priest is completing His work of reconciliation on this antitypical Day of Atonement. This required a clearer view of Christ's sacrifice on His cross, and of His righteousness manifested in human flesh, clearer than had ever been seen before.

In summation, any message of righteousness by faith which succeeds in uniting the world church must be: (a) biblical; (b) in harmony with the writings of Ellen G. White; and (c) in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist Church history.

Therefore, it seems that the only reasonable basis for unity is indeed the 1888 message itself. It is (a) biblical, for Jones and Waggoner relied entirely in Scripture; (b) in complete harmony with Ellen White's writings, and enjoys her unequivocal support and endorsement in forcefulness and emphasis completely unprecedented in her long prophetic career; and (c) Seventh-day Adventist history points unmistakably in that direction as the path to repentance in fulfillment of our Lord's command.

"Let us thank the Lord that He is dealing with us still, to save us from our errors, to save us from our dangers, to keep us back from wrong courses, and to pour upon us the latter rain, that we may be translated. That is what the [1888] message means--translation--to you and me. ... Let us receive it with all the heart, and thank God for it." [3]

Remember: Truth never causes disunity; only error does.

--From the Writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, emphasis added.

[2] Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 253, 356.

[3] A. T. Jones, General Conference Daily Bulletin, 1893; "The Third Angel's Message No. 9"; p. 185.

Chapter 42

That They All May Be One

Almost every Sabbath School class can be split on Bible issues such as what nature did Christ "take" in His incarnation, or what is the unique Adventist idea of the cleansing of the sanctuary, or what is justification. The good news of our overcoming "even as [Christ] overcame" is often denigrated as the heresy of "perfectionism." "Independent ministries" and independent publications are legion. Our interpretations of the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation are variant and contradictory.

Our leaders wistfully ask with reference to the earth-lighting fourth angel's message of Revelation 18, "How can we light the world with the glory of the three angels' messages if we are busy fighting among ourselves?" Some times in our Sabbath School Lessons, Christlike unity is spoken of, as "it-would-be-nice-if." Is Jesus still praying His prayer of John 17? The nearer we come to the end of the world, the more we seem to be riven asunder by our heart convictions of what is truth. Most pastors now refuse to preach about the solid Seventh-day Adventist core truths that established our identity.

What is the only effective solution?

Jesus asked His Father to "sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. ... For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. ... I pray ... that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (vss. 17-21). In other words, Revelation 18 is a mere fantasy unless we come into unity in the simple experience of believing revealed truth.

In the celebrated 1848 Sabbath Conferences our pioneers on their knees wrestled their "sanctified" way through to solid truths that established this church. They resolved the Great Disappointment confusion by wholeheartedly embracing the truth of the sanctuary doctrine.

But the Lord Jesus saw that after a few decades the truth was still largely an intellectual conviction. A dead formalism was gripping the church and its ministerial or pastoral leadership. Therefore in 1888 "in His great mercy" He "sent a most precious message" which He intended should bring us into a perfect heart and intellectual unity, prepared for the final movement of Revelation 18. For many decades the full truth of what happened was carefully concealed from our knowledge as Ellen White's testimonies regarding "1888" were buried in her Ellen G. White Estate Vault and research was discouraged. In 1987, preparatory to a grand Centennial in 1988, the White Estate published in four huge volumes, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, every word that she had written about "1888." The total is 1821 pages.

The result: we find that numerous times she likens "our" denominational reaction to that "most precious message" as "just like the Jews'" reaction to Jesus Christ. She compares the same raw unbelief that plagued ancient Israel in the days of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to our disunity of unbelief regarding the Lord's leading in the 1888 message. [1] This spirit was not one-hundred percent, but it was "in a great measure" and "in a great degree." [2] The result was decisive in that it turned away the gift of the latter rain and prevented that generation from witnessing the events of Revelation 18.

A genuine faith includes within itself a belief of the truth. Ellen White declared that the time will come when Seventh-day Adventists will be totally united in their heartfelt belief of theological truth, as it was in our pioneer beginning. There will be no more split Sabbath School classes or divided churches. Speaking of "those who are engaged in proclaiming the last

solemn message to a dying world," she says, "although possessing different temperaments and dispositions, they will see eye to eye in all matters of religious belief. They will speak the same things; they will have the same judgment; they will be one in Christ Jesus." [3]

Ancient Israel's problem was rebellion against the Lord's leading; it's ours, too. But the Holy Spirit is giving the gift of denominational repentance: "Then the work will move forward with solidity and double strength. A new efficiency will be imparted to the workers in every line. Men will learn of the reconciliation from iniquity which the Messiah has brought in through His sacrifice. The last message of warning and salvation will be given with mighty power. The earth will be lightened with the glory of God, and it will be ours to witness the soon coming in power and glory, of our Lord and Saviour." [4]

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 600.

[2] Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 235.

[3] Ellen G. White, Historical Sketches, p.124.

[4] Ellen G. White, Medical Ministry, p. 185.

Chapter 43

Christ, the Key to Unity

Chaos. It's becoming the defining word for the world we live in. The Middle East has been at war for more than twenty years, with Syria nearly annihilating their own civilian population. Politics, whether in the United States or Europe has become a divisive, almost uncivil enterprise. Some nations are on the brink of financial chaos. Society is divided on many levels: women's liberation movement against any form of male leadership; LGBTQ+ against the Christians; Democrats against the Republicans in a caustic battle for power; a rising liberal youth segment against anyone older than 30. Central Africa has seen civil war at unprecedented levels, with famine and plagues exacerbating the situation for the populace.

Even the natural world seems stirred to chaotic levels. The Pacific has seen more cyclones with wind speeds greater than 155 miles per hour this year than any other on record. The Atlantic ocean has produced two catastrophic storms in a matter of weeks. Earthquakes, volcanoes erupting, fires destroying vast swathes of western United States forests and some towns. It seems that the very earth is revolting.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:7, 8).

Our study this quarter is unity. How can unity be accomplished in the face of such chaos? Unity in today's world seems to be akin to the proverbial "black swan." Juvenal, the Roman poet of the first century, advanced the philosophical theory that applied to events that were so rare as to be considered nearly impossible. He called such events a "black swan." His

phrase caught on, and the truism held for nearly 1700 years--no one had ever seen a black swan until a Dutch explorer discovered one in western Australia in 1697. We have been proclaiming the "soon coming" of Jesus for 175 years, but for many people, it seems like that proverbial black swan, something the world will never see, or least, something that we will never see in our lifetime.

The last message to be given to the world engulfed in chaos, is the message of God's unfathomable love. That Love, "so loved the world" that it was willing to sacrifice itself so that others might live. "From the foundation of the world" this Love has unstintingly laid itself down for us. God "ordained" or "predestined" to be saved, every human being who would ever be born on this planet. "[God] hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Peter wrote that we have been [past tense] "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, Who verily was foreordained from the foundation of world" (1 Peter 1:19, 20). Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy, that Christ is "the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

As soon as sin entered this world, Christ stepped between the living and dead, giving His own life, that the human race would continue through Adam. Adam and Eve did not die that afternoon in the Garden (see Gen. 2:17) because the Substitute was found--Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). "As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary." [1]

Now, imagine what would have happened if no substitute had stepped forward that afternoon. God had stated emphatically (Hebrew doubling, "die,

you shall die") that the day Adam sinned was the day he would die. If Adam had reaped the just punishment for his rebellion, then the human race would have ceased to exist that very afternoon. We are only still here six millennia later because of the infinite love of our God.

This truth is the essential meaning of that complicated sounding phrase, "legal justification." Standing before the broken law, Christ stepped into Adam's "shoes" and assumed complete responsibility for the crime Adam committed, and accepted the just punishment to be inflicted upon Himself. To do this, Christ had to also, one day, assume the nature of fallen Adam.

Corporately, as the "Last Adam," Christ took upon His sinless nature the nature that needed redeeming, and as corporate mankind, He lived a perfect life, and then took that perfect life and offered it on the cross of Calvary. "Because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14). And as Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," His "one just act" (see Rom. 5:15-19) emancipated the entire human race. [2] Thus, the Godhead canceled the death penalty for every human being-- "especially those who believe." For the many who will not believe, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb. 10:26, 27).

What a message we have been given to share with the dying world--a world in chaos, that is looking for love in all the wrong places! God loves you with an intimate, personal, undying love that will not let you go, unless you resist and chose to run away. Such good news, when shared with people who are searching for relief from the troubles of this world, will bring unity "in Christ" when they learn to appreciate what has already been done to save them eternally from sin. They don't have to "get better" first, before God will love them. They are already "beloved" in Christ who gave His life for them, and "adopted" them into His family (Eph. 1:3-5).

The "goal" of unity is not some future reward in heaven that we must diligently work for. The goal is Christ! Learning from Him how to consistently behave like a child of the King of the universe, as we grow daily into the likeness of His character, "till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). [The additional comma after the word "come," is intentional. It places the emphasis of Paul's words on the goal of Christ--the Perfect Man--rather than on our "faith." All punctuation in the Bible is translator supplied.]

The key to unity, is not more agreement between individuals or in church councils. True unity will happen when individuals rally behind the great truths of the 1888 message that, when accepted in its fullness, will allow heaven to open its doors and pour out the long-awaited Latter Rain upon a penitent and humbled people. Not everyone wants to be united, and it's a pipe dream to think all will be united. Disunity arises from a sinful, selfish heart that most of the world will cling to right up to the very end.

This means that, just as in the past, there will continue to be opposition to God's final message to the dying world--the message of Christ and His righteousness. But when God finally has a people--that mysterious 144,000--who are willing to give up on self and "follow the Lamb wherever He goes," then the Latter Rain will fall upon that "especially-who-believe" group of people.

Everyone will not be the recipients of this blessing from heaven. "Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it." [3]

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, March 12, 1901.

[2] See Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 90.

[3] Ellen. G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 507.

Chapter 44

The Experience of Unity in the Early Church

During this quarter, millions of Christians around the world are giving special study to unity within the church. We're studying what the Bible speaks of as unity within the church. Christ prayed for it (John 17:20, 21). Paul said that Christ's agape love will produce it (Eph. 4:13-16). The very doctrine of God demands it (vss. 2-6). But we have to face reality: churches often have disagreements and divisions, even within one denomination and even within one church body.

In a church that has for 150 years stood for creation in 6 days, a literal reading of Genesis 1, 2, etc., there are now powerful voices advocating evolution. And there are divisions about women's ordination, about music in church worship services, etc. And for many, "the blessed hope" of the soon second coming of Christ is receding into the background, and a materialistic earthly millennium is taking its place.

Why does disunion seem to flourish so? And how can the church enlighten the earth with glory if it is in a divided state? And what can bring the true unity Christ prayed for? There is a solution.

If God is real and if His Bible is true, it follows that God has a solution for the problem of disunity.

God will bring His people into unity. That which to doubters today seems impossible, the Holy Spirit will accomplish.

He brought the disunited eleven apostles into unity before the Day of Pentecost. They were "with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). That was

"the former rain," and the "latter rain" is promised to be even greater.

God cannot use force to accomplish it. For Him to burn down the churches or strike them with lightning, wouldn't solve the root problem.

Ephesians tells us the solution: for those "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine," is the message of agape (4:14, 15). Such a message is the objective gospel, the message of what Christ accomplished, the pure biblical truth of justification by faith.

Christ has promised solemnly that if He is lifted up on His cross, that is, if His agape is clearly proclaimed, He "will draw all men unto [Himself]," and that of course is perfect unity (John 12:32). Let the leadership of a church that is being fragmented receive that most precious message of Christ's righteousness; the miracle of unity will be as certain as day follows night.

"Pentecost" is a big word to Christian people. It came 50 days after Christ's resurrection. The disciples met together to pray and study for 10 days previous, so that by the time that the Day of Pentecost arrived, they were finally in total harmony and unity, "in one accord" (Acts 2:1). May the Lord hasten the day when His modern "apostles" will finally be in "one accord" in their understanding of the truth of the gospel!

A great blessing came on that day. The true and genuine "gift of tongues" was manifest so that everyone from all parts of the world who were gathered in Jerusalem heard the glad tidings in his own language so he could clearly understand it. The Holy Spirit was given in a fullness that has never since been equaled.

What was it about the message of Pentecost that had such tremendous power that 3000 were converted, truly converted, in a day?

Was it something that even Paul did not as clearly articulate? Ellen G. White has said, "Great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost, are to shine from God's word in their native purity" (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 473; 1897).

Is there a "great truth" that shone clearly on the Day of Pentecost that even the apostle Paul did not preach? Yes, there is one: Speaking to that great crowd of thousands of people from many nations and languages, Peter boldly declared that they had crucified the Son of God: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). A few days later he told them, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... and killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14, 15). Nothing in Paul's epistles is quite so strong, so directly confrontational!

What happened on the day of Pentecost? A repentance deeper than has ever been known. The murder of the Son of God is the greatest sin ever committed; repentance for that sin is the greatest a human heart can ever know. Do you think it might be possible that Peter's sermon applies to us today?

--Paul E. Penno

Chapter 45

Images of Unity

The Bible is full of metaphors but none is more important for the church than the 1888 message's concept that we are all "in" Christ. All other metaphors are developed out of that basic concept. To understand this, there are some hints in David's psalm quoted above. He connects unity to the "oil" as the vehicle which connects "brothers." How do we come to understand that we are all brothers and how does that unify us? The answer is in the sacrifice of the cross.

Christ laid aside His divinity ("emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men," Phil. 2:7). Notice, He did not abandon his divinity, He laid it aside. In other words, He didn't use it to help Him during His earthly ministry. Many find this difficult to believe because He performed miracles and never sinned. Christ came to demonstrate to the world and watching universe that the Holy Spirit can indwell "sinful flesh" so completely, that "our life will be a life of continual obedience" as if "carrying out our own impulses." [1]

Why did Christ have to lay aside His divinity? The Bible teaches that it is unethical for someone to be punished for another's wrong. Ezekiel 18:20 makes it very clear: "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself." Since the first Adam brought the entire human race into sin, the only solution was the eternal (second) death; no human sacrifice could pay this penalty and be resurrected. That required the death of Someone with the power to resurrect, but Divinity cannot die.

To resolve this dilemma, Hebrews 10:5 says, "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me'" In order for God to save us through Christ He had to qualify Christ to be our Savior. God did this by combining the divine life of His Son with the human Adamic life and uniting the two in the womb of Mary. Corporately, the entire race, out of all the created beings in the universe, was united with Divinity. We did not deserve this, but our magnificent and gracious God made this supreme sacrifice.

"None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity." [2]

"By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us." [3]

The angel told Mary that Jesus' conception would be accomplished by the Holy Spirit which "will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Mary's pregnancy was not initiated by an ordinary man, but by the Holy Spirit. Thus, humanity and divinity were combined her womb.

"If He were not of the same flesh as are those whom He came to redeem, then there is no sort of use of His being made flesh at all. More than this:

Since the only flesh that there is in this wide world which He came to redeem, is just the poor, sinful, lost, human flesh that all mankind have; if this is not the flesh that He was made, then He never really came to the world which needs to be redeemed. [4]

When Jesus told Nicodemus we must be born again, He meant born of the Spirit, just as the Spirit caused His conception in the womb of Mary. David must have recognized something of this mechanism when he could think of nothing to compare his joy to except the anointing oil which inaugurated Aaron's high priestly imagery. That oil was given so lavishly that it fell onto his beard and cloths, all the way to the hem of his garment. Again, the imagery was echoed when Mary Magdalene found there was so much of her gift of oil that she had to use her hair to catch the excess.

The imagery is continued at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the earth to facilitate Christ's high priestly ministry, which He began at His ascension. The imagery parallels the lavish oil of Aaron, which resulted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the believers at Pentecost were anointed with the oil which anointed Jesus in heaven.

The result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, if accepted in the heart of the believer results in the washing of regeneration. David saw this when his mind went to the "dew of Hermon" which washed Zion.

Imagery and metaphor are wonderful vehicles to help us understand the plan of salvation. David's Psalm 133 describes that only the oil of the Holy Spirit and the washing of regeneration can accomplish unity among believers. By accepting our position in Christ, we realize we stand equally with all believers. Whatever degree of unity is necessary to protect the church will flow naturally from that.

--Arlene Hill

Footnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

[3] *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

[4] A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, p. 41;
Glad Tidings ed. (2003).

Chapter 46

When Conflicts Arise

The unity of the church is a precious fruit of "the truth of the gospel." Jesus is the Truth. "The most precious message," which uplifts and honors the sacrifice of Christ, unifies. So-called "gospels" derived from the old covenant--man's power to be saved--divide the church.

The issue of circumcision threatened to split the early church. The rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses as a means of salvation assumed an idol-status in the minds of certain "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4) who came to the Antioch church from Judea (Acts 15:1). They taught "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1, New King James Version).

"They insisted that the Jewish laws and ceremonies should be incorporated into the rites of the Christian religion. They were slow to discern that all the sacrificial offerings had but prefigured the death of the Son of God, in which type met antitype, and after which the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation were no longer binding" [1] They succeeded in gathering to themselves the support of the Jewish Christians in Antioch, creating no small stir.

The Apostle Paul felt obliged to confront this matter head-on for it was an issue over "the truth of the gospel." Is it the power of God's grace that saves sinners; or, is it circumcision that saves, and hence the power of man's obedience to the whole law that saves?

It had been some time since Paul had paid a visit to Jerusalem. The church of Antioch thought it would be a good thing for him to go and discuss

this matter with the other apostles and brethren assembled there (Acts 15:2).

Paul's visit to Jerusalem was a divine mandate--"by revelation" (Gal. 2:2). God's purpose for him going was to preserve the unity of the church leadership regarding the gospel. Obviously the "false brethren" were intentionally seeking to unsettle the minds of the apostles and create a division between the churches and an internal conflict among the apostles over the gospel.

Paul's purpose in going was not to see whether his gospel was in harmony with the brethren. He was clear that "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11, 12). His purpose in going to Jerusalem was to proclaim the gospel to the apostles in order to preserve the unity of the church. That which creates disunity in the church is "another gospel," which is not really the gospel. Satan knows this and seeks to bring in the principle of the old covenant self-reliance, and self-sufficiency, in every possible way to create dissension and disunity.

The entourage that accompanied Paul to Jerusalem were Barnabas and Titus. Paul brought Titus into the church without circumcision. The significance of this detail is that the apostles in Jerusalem didn't require Titus to be circumcised in order to fellowship with them. This was a confirmation of the unity which prevailed among the apostles.

The "false brethren" conspired to enslave the Gentiles to the yoke of bondage--the old covenant. Peter said: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). "Peter here referred to the law of ceremonies, which was made null and void by the crucifixion of Christ." [2] Whoever induces people to trust in the law for righteousness without Christ simply puts a yoke upon them and fastens them in bondage.

Those who "seemed to be pillars" (Cephas, James, and John) in the church, "perceived," "the grace that was given unto Paul" (Gal. 2:9). They finally relented and humbled their hearts and extended to Paul "the right hands of fellowship" (vs. 9). In effect the apostles said, "Paul, thank God, you are preaching the true gospel. You must go to the Gentiles and we will go to the Jews." Even with this the apostles didn't go far enough.

What the apostles should have said was, "Paul, we want you to go to the Gentiles, but go to the Jews also; and we will go to the Gentiles also." So Peter, James, and John still weren't clear that it was their job to go to the whole world as is indicated by the incident that followed.

At Antioch Peter was accustomed to eating in fellowship with the Gentiles. When he saw a delegation from Jerusalem headquarters sent by James, he got up from eating with the Gentiles. He went to another table and the Jewish Christians followed him. Peter's action was prompted by "fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:12).

Paul had brought these Gentiles into church fellowship with the knowledge that Christ was their Messiah. Now Peter's actions sent the wrong message to the Gentiles. The Gentiles might be led to think, "We are lost because the Messiah is only for the Jews." Paul was not afraid of these "false brethren." So Paul confronted Peter publicly over the issue "because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11).

Paul "saw that they [Peter and the "false brethren"] walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14). Peter was sending the message to the Gentiles that in order to be saved they must be circumcised. In other words, believing that Christ is the Messiah is fine. However, the power of man's obedience to the whole law must be added to this in order to be saved. This false gospel had the potential of dividing the church.

The 1888 message brings to the forefront the principles of the two covenants. The old covenant is manifested by many different so-called "gospels," all based on self-sufficiency. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). God's new covenant promise is the "much more abounding grace" of Christ crucified and resurrected. It is this true gospel that unites the church. The old covenant "gospels" generate bondage to sin and foster disunity.

There is only one "truth of the gospel" that is in harmony with all God's Ten Commandments and that is the "most precious message" which uplifts and honors the sacrifice of Christ. It is "present truth" in the setting of our cosmic day of at-one-ment-with God. That is, it is God's love revealed in the ever-present cross, that reconciles alienated hearts to Himself by means of Christ's High Priestly ministry. This gets to the taproot of unconscious sin so that the soul identifies with the crucified One. Justification by faith and the cleansing of the sanctuary truth become one grand truth which lightens the earth with God's glorious true character of self-denying agape-love.

--Paul E. Penno

Footnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles, p. 189.

[2] Ibid., p. 194

Chapter 47

Unity in Faith

The Quarterly begins with a snapshot of the controversy of 1888, but the image is blurred, and must be brought into proper focus.

Yes, there was discussion about just which tribes constituted the ten horns of Daniel 7. However, the controversy and "hostile attitudes" began two years before, and remains with us to this day. In 1886, E. J. Waggoner wrote a commentary on the covenants that focused Galatians 3:24 on Christ instead of the law. The General Conference leadership took exception to Waggoner's position because they saw it as undermining the foundation of their argument in support of the perpetuity of the Sabbath. Their attitude was, throw out the law and you throw out support for the Sabbath truth! Waggoner was not throwing out the law. He was instead placing the law where it belonged. The goal was not perfect law-keeping, but the perfect righteousness of Christ as the only source of our salvation.

When Ellen White came down on the Waggoner and Jones' side of the debate, the older and "more experienced brethren" became upset. A. G. Daniells later wrote that she had to stand "almost alone" against nearly the entire General Conference in her defense of Waggoner and Jones' position on righteousness by faith in Christ alone. [1] The elder brethren's feet were firmly set in the concrete of their "stand by the old landmarks" position. They could not accept that two young men with practically no theological experience could have been chosen of God, and given "divine credentials" [2] to teach them--the theologically experienced brethren--concerning the everlasting covenant and righteousness by faith.

As the argument continued through the years following Minneapolis, in

1890 Ellen White wrote to Uriah Smith that he, Dan Jones, and "Brother Porter" were "spending [their] investigative powers for naught to produce a position on the covenants to vary from the position that Brother Waggoner has presented. ... The covenant question is a clear question and would be received by every candid, unprejudiced mind ... You have turned from plain light because you were afraid that the law question in Galatians would have to be accepted." [3]

Ellen White wrote, "In the manifestation of the power that lightens the earth with its glory [referring to Rev. 18:4 under the power of the latter rain], they [the opposers of the 1888 message] will see only something which in their blindness they think dangerous, something which will arouse their fears and they will brace themselves against it. Because the Lord does not work according to their expectations and ideas, they will oppose the work." [4]

Tuesday's lesson discusses our unique sanctuary doctrine. We most assuredly must stand firmly on our distinctive and essential doctrines--the work of our High Priest for His people, and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. This is our "essential doctrine" that called us out in 1844, and separates us from all other denominations in the whole world. But when was the last time you heard a sermon on Sabbath morning on any aspect of the sanctuary? [5] There are other people who keep the Sabbath, who long for the coming of Christ in clouds of glory, and who understand the non-immortality of the "soul" of man. But no other people understand the ministry of our High Priest in purifying a "peculiar people" who will defend His character of love before a disintegrating world on the brink of self destruction.

During the same time when God was seeking a people upon whom He could rain down the blessings from heaven, Satan was fast at work creating a counterfeit theory of righteousness so deceptive that it captured the minds of many of God's "elect." This deception was rooted in pantheism, taught by J.

H. Kellogg at Battle Creek, and infected some of the "brightest stars" of the church at that time. It was a theory that made the sanctuary unneeded baggage in man's quest for holiness.

"Any man who seeks to present theories which would lead us from the light that has come to us on the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, should not be accepted as a teacher. A true understanding of the sanctuary question means much to us as a people." [6] These words were written in the context of the pantheism crisis precipitated by the teachings of Kellogg on the nature of God. "If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power within him." [7]

The crisis that confronted the church at the turn of the last century (the "alpha"), will raise its head again (as the "omega") just before Christ returns. Many people will be confused about our distinctive doctrines, and will be led to abandon the sanctuary truth and all that is part of that truth (e.g., the investigative judgment; cleansing and transformation of our characters before the second coming).

"There is in it [pantheism] the beginning of theories which, carried to their logical conclusion, would destroy faith in the sanctuary question and in the atonement. I do not think that Dr. Kellogg saw this clearly. I do not think that he realized that in laying his new foundation of faith, he was directing his steps toward infidelity." [8]

Pantheism's theory is that all is one and all is god (monism). If all is god, then man is god. This idea was deceptively transformed into "Christ in you," a counterfeit to the Biblical teaching of "Christ in you, the hope of glory ... that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1:27, 28). If all is god, then all is good, and the concept that sin separates us from God is denied, and salvation "from sin" loses all meaning. We don't need a Saviour

if god is "us," as pantheism declares. All a person needs to do is "seek the god"--or "divine spark"--within each of us, by opening the mind through "mindfulness" meditation, controlled breathing, slowly repeating resonant syllables while attempting to obtain a "clear mind," and "focusing on the divine."

However, there is a vast gulf between this "new age" type of hypnotic meditation and the "meditate upon every Word of God" type of "thoughtful hour" we are counseled to do when "contemplating the life of Christ." "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross." [9]

Notice: The focus is not on us, but on Christ's work of righteousness. Such deep contemplation may and should elicit a response from a broken and contrite heart. Tears may flow, heart rate quicken (rather than slow, as in "new age" meditation), as our mind reflects on the differences between our sinfulness, and the love and righteousness demonstrated by God in Gethsemane and on the cross.

Returning to our discussion on the sanctuary, we find that an essential element to the sanctuary doctrine is Christ, our High Priest, and His ministry in cleansing a people from all sin. The nature which Christ assumed in His incarnation is a necessary aspect of the sanctuary. If Christ was not "touched with the feelings of our infirmities" so that He could be "in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15), then He does not qualify as our High Priest. In God's design in the earthly sanctuary, the priest was taken from among the people he was to represent in his work of intercession. The priest had

common temptations and inclinations to sin; he "knew what was in man" (see for example John 2:25), and therefore was prepared to present the repentant petitions of fallen men and women before the throne of grace.

When Christ became human, in order to save the human race, He had to assume that which He was not. Even though Jesus took upon Himself the common inclinations and propensities of fallen flesh, never once did He indulge them, and never once did Jesus sin, not even by a thought. Therefore, Paul implores us, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" because with that mind, we too can overcome all sin. [10]

"Now as to Christ's not having 'like passions' with us: In the Scriptures all the way through He is like us and with us according to the flesh. He is the seed of David according to the flesh [Rom. 1:3]. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh [Rom. 8:3]. Don't go too far. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of sinful mind. Do not drag His mind into it. His flesh was our flesh, but the mind was 'the mind of Christ Jesus.' Therefore it is written: 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' [Phil. 2:5]. If He had taken our mind, how, then, could we ever have been exhorted to 'let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?' It would have been so already." [11]

If we would just "let" this mind be in us--stop fighting against the work of Holy Spirit to cleanse us--then Christ could finish His work in the heavenly sanctuary, and come to take His purified people home. The work of purifying a people must begin in the hearts of the people, which is the source of the fountain of sin that flows into the heavenly sanctuary.

"The service in the earthly sanctuary shows also that in order for the sanctuary to be cleansed and the course of the gospel service there to be finished, it must first be finished in the people who have a part in the service. ... The cleansing of the sanctuary, as to the sanctuary itself, was the taking

out of and away from the sanctuary all the transgression of the people ... And this stream must be stopped at its fountain in the hearts and lives of the worshipers, before the sanctuary itself could possibly be cleansed. ... The ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary does take away sins forever, does make the comers thereunto perfect, does perfect 'forever them that are sanctified.'" [12]

Overcoming all sin in this present life through the power of Christ's faith alone working in us to "will and to do of His good pleasure," will produce the outworking of His love through us toward others (Phil. 2:12, 13). This is the goal of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary--the final display of God's power to transform our characters. Then we will be prepared to visibly display His character of love to the lost world. [13] It is this that will develop a united and "peculiar people" of whom He can declare: "Here are they that keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus!" (Rev. 14:12).

--Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] See A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, p. 369.

[2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259.

[3] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 604; Letter 59, 1890.

[4] *Review and Herald Extra*, Dec. 23, 1890.

[5] An excellent source book for studying the sanctuary message is *The Cross and Its Shadow*, by S. N. Haskell, who was a delegate to the 1888 conference, and one of the few at that time who believed the Jones and Waggoner message.

[6] Ellen G. White, Manuscript 125, 1907, p. 6.

[7] Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 40.

[8] Ellen G. White, Letter 33, 1904, par. 4.

- [9] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.
- [10] See Robert J. Wieland's *The Good News is Better Than You Think*, CFI Book Division ed. (2018), pp. 13, 14, 24, 52, and 53 for a discussion of how we "let" Christ's mind be in us.
- [11] A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message No. 17," 1895 General Conference Bulletin, p. 327.
- [12] A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, pp. 120, 121, Glad Tidings ed. (2003).
- [13] See Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

Chapter 48

The Most Convincing Proof

The history and content of the 1888 message are of keen interest to Seventh-day Adventists around the world. Ellen White has said repeatedly that failure to understand and to accept that message has greatly retarded the progress of the church and delayed the triumph of the "everlasting gospel" message.

In our modern day, schisms, apostasies, fanaticisms, conflicting interpretations of the prophecies, the inroads of the so-called "new theology" [and current divisions on women's ordination and other issues] have plagued the church. The resultant loss of ministers and members has been heavy. These many problems are related to confusion and misconception of the 1888 history and message.

Those who believe the New Testament recognize that the Jews rejected and crucified their Messiah. If the Jewish nation should wish to get right with God, would it not be a good idea for them to understand that mistake and repent of it?

If we wish to get right with the Lord, would it not be wise for us to understand our history and accept His gift of repentance? "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" [1] It would follow logically that we have everything to fear if we forget our past and disregard "His teaching in our past history."

A true understanding of the gospel is precisely what this sin-cursed world desperately needs to know. After Christianity has professed to

proclaim the gospel for two thousand years, the agony and evil in the world appear to be getting worse. Millions who want to believe in God feel forced to doubt that He exists or that He cares. Could it be that the pure gospel has not yet been proclaimed as it should be?

Surprising as it may be, there is more than one gospel: (a) the pure truth that Paul and the apostles preached which he calls "the grace of Christ," and (b) there is a counterfeit gospel which he says is "another gospel: which is not another," but a perversion of "the gospel of Christ." According to Paul's strong words, "any other gospel" than the true one Christ gave ends up being a "curse" (Gal. 1:6-9).

The reason why the enemy of Christ specializes in perverting the gospel is because he knows that the true one is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), just as good food is healthful nourishment to one's body. But a little arsenic mixed in one's diet is lethal. In the final judgment all will see that the world's continual agony has been the direct result of a perversion of the gospel which "Babylon" has foisted on mankind (Rev. 18:24).

The truth is that the Lord has given us a special message of Good News that people must learn to believe. The Lord never called Seventh-day Adventists to preach legalism to the world. Our special commission is to recover and proclaim the precise Good News that is already "the salvation of God" and which prepares a people for the second coming of Christ. In fact, the message of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 is in a unique sense "the everlasting gospel" for the last days. It must be the best Good News the world has ever heard.

Can the Seventh-day Adventist Church ever come into unity in knowing and accepting this Good News message? If it is the true "remnant" church of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12, the answer has to be, Yes. If grace is stronger than sin, then truth has to be stronger than error, and the Holy Spirit must be

stronger than the flesh, and light must be stronger than darkness. We do not say "if" because we doubt; we would rather say, "Because it is the remnant church," the answer has to be yes. "Mind will be arrayed against mind, plans against plans, principles of heavenly origin against principles of Satan. Truth in its varied phases will be in conflict with error in its ever-varying, increasing forms, and which, if possible, will deceive the very elect." [2] Note: the "elect" are not deceived. "Truth in its varied phases" will overcome "error in its ... increasing forms." That's Good News!

Ellet J. Waggoner has written: "The union of the Father and the Son is union of Spirit. We cannot comprehend this union, but we may know that it is not a forced union, but that it results from their very nature. They have one life. Their thoughts and purposes are the same, not because they come together and compare notes and agree to be alike, but because one life is in them both. So the union of believers is to be a vital union, or it is not any union at all. It is not accomplished by strife and debate and decisions of majorities, but by yielding the mind to Christ and hearing His voice. They are to be united by the mind and Spirit of Christ. The life of the Father and the Son in each member of the church will produce the most perfect union in the whole body. ...

"This gives no ground for the idea that there may be divisions in the church of Christ, one division believing one thing, and another division believing and practising another thing. God has 'tempered the body together, ... that there should be no schism in the body (1 Cor. 12:24, 25). 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all' (Eph. 4:4-6). The apostle's exhortation is, 'that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment' (1 Cor. 1:10). But let it be borne in mind that this union is not artificial, but natural; not the human nature, however, but the divine nature.

...

"Christ desires unity, but He does not try to force it, because the unity which is essential is the unity of growth into Christ, and growth cannot be forced. The religion of Jesus is love, and force kills love. Where there is no love there is no righteousness; ..." [3]

We want to "win" not merely "warn" those with whom we are in disagreement. We live in a time fraught with tremendous significance; we are living this side of the greatest world movement that has ever happened in 6000 years of history--the earth is to be "lightened" with the glory of that fourth angel of Revelation 18. The "beginning" of that wonderful work came in 1888.

Let me encourage you: Be true to the truth; defend it, but do so with Christ-like words, in a generous spirit.

--From the Writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

[1] Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, p. 196.

[2] Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 407.

[3] Ellet J. Waggoner, "Unity and Uniformity," The Present Truth, April 20, 1893.

Chapter 49

Unity and Broken Relationships

When we appreciate what it took for the Father and Jesus to forgive us sinners, then we will find it in our hearts to forgive others their sins toward us.

The "good news" that salvation in Christ is not a mere provision, but a fact; that Christ is not merely offered to every man, but given to every man; that the Lord loves us so much that we cannot be lost unless we resist the Holy Spirit; that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost, in view of this great salvation; that when Christ died on the cross, He actually did something for "every man"; that it is God who takes the initiative in effecting our salvation, and that it is impossible to be lost unless we take the initiative in resisting and rejecting what He has effected for us; and that justification by God's free grace is effected for "all," God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, "all men" owe even their physical life to Christ's sacrifice and by His stripes they are healed.

This all sounds like "good news" to me. But the world does not know or understand it because no one is telling it to them, or at least very few are; and those in the remnant church who should understand it and proclaim it powerfully and effectively are themselves confused by conflicting concepts of justification by faith. Here are several Scripture passages which support the 1888 view:

"We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1

John 4:10). Truly this "propitiation" applies to "all men." It is more than a mere "provision," for "never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary Is stamped on every loaf." [1] "Our Saviour Jesus Christ ... hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

The "propitiation" therefore is already effective for "all," "saint or sinner." "All men" live because of it. It is the basis for justification. Only because of the "propitiation" is it possible for God to overlook "the sins of the whole world" and send His "rain on the just and on the unjust", and open His hand, to satisfy "the desire of every living thing" (Matt. 5:45; Psalm 145:16).

Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). The text does not say that provisionally, possibly, maybe, perhaps, Christ will be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world if and when and not until the sinner "accepts." Christ already is that propitiation. This grand "provision" of the cross is "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). When the "propitiation" is "set forth" to the sinner and he believes it, then he experiences justification by faith.

"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,... God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:6-10).

The death of Christ made effective a lawful justification applicable to all men. Legally, "all men" were justified, because He died for "all" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). He satisfied the demands of the law for sinners. And He died for them "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8). "When" we were still "enemies, we were reconciled ..." (Rom. 5:10).

That sounds like a blatant contradiction, doesn't it? How can you be "reconciled" while you are still in enmity? The answer is: we were justified legally by a sacrifice made for "all men" (Rom. 5:18), and the reconciliation is included.

But think about it, legal justification and "receiving the atonement" are two different things. We receive the atonement [reconciliation] only when we believe. "We have now received the atonement [reconciliation]," Paul says in Romans 5:11, when we are "justified by faith" (verse 1). To confuse legal justification with justification by faith will not help us finish the work in this generation; it will set our clock back to the 16th century, and lead to antinomianism. Instead of completing the Reformation begun by Luther and Calvin, such confusion will only retard its progress.

"Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18).

Again we have what appears to be a contradiction! How can Paul contrast the "judgment" which came by Adam upon "all men to condemnation" with the "free gift ... unto justification" coming likewise "upon all men"? The vast majority of "all men" certainly do not exhibit any of the fruits of "justification by faith"!

The answer to this apparent contradiction is simply to say that that is true--"all men" do not exhibit the fruits of justification by faith because they have not been justified by faith. They have only been justified legally; and the simple fact that they live is evidence of that legal justification. "All men" would not be able to draw even one breath if that forensic justification were not effective for them. The very fact they live is proof that Christ died for them, and is the "propitiation" for their sins.

Here is where the "gospel" comes in. We are commissioned by the Lord to "go into all the world" and tell "all men" that they have been justified. We are to bear "good news." God has no chip on His shoulder against them. He is not imputing their trespasses unto them. The propitiation is already a fact, not a mere provision. And when some believe, that moment they are "justified by faith."

"If One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves ..." (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

All would be dead if He had not "died for all." The grave is what we deserve. The very fact "all" live is evidence that a forensic justification has been effective for them in that "our Saviour Jesus Christ ... hath brought life... to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). "Life" has thus been provided for "all men" who deserve only death. More than this, those who appreciate the "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), those who "believe," for them Christ Jesus also "hath brought immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Clearly, God does not "impute" any man's trespasses unto him until he rejects Christ. Therefore, the only sin for which anyone will be condemned in the Judgment is the sin of unbelief, that is, the sin of not appreciating the sacrifice which effected a legal justification for all. [2] When Christ died, He did something for every man, woman, and child in the world. He was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). This "Light" is not a mere provision--it is effective. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (verse 4). No one, saint or sinner, ever knows a moment of joy, ever smiles, but by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. This is

"news" the world needs to hear; and for those who believe it, it is "good news."

"For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendor, and all are justified by God's free grace alone, through His act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23, 24, New English Bible).

This "all" means what it says, for it harmonizes with the other passages. The New English Bible correctly translates the Greek "justified," which is a present participle with the word "all" as its proper subject. Since God's grace is "free," it must be equally manifested to "all." If it is a mere provision subject to certain conditions it cannot be described as "free." But this "justification by God's free grace alone" obviously must be forensic, for "all men" do not believe it and receive it.

Paul continues in verses 25-28 to discuss justification, proceeding from the forensic justification effected for "all" to the experiential justification which brings "remission of sins" "through faith in His blood." And because faith is counted for righteousness, God can "be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This involves a change of heart! Justification by faith is not merely forensic, a judicial "declaring" millions of light-years away. It includes remission of sins! "Remission" is not a mere entry in a legal record, without relation to the heart of the sinner. "Remission" is the actual taking away of the sin, accomplished in justification by faith.

--Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

[2] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58.

Chapter 50

Unity in Worship

Meeting together with people to worship God can be a blessed experience that is better than the sum of the individuals worshipping separately. The culture of heavenly worship always includes infinite numbers of beings delighted to join together in adoration of their Creator God. As our Quarterly notes on page 89, "Worship is a response of our faith in God for His mighty works: first, for creating us, and, second, for redeeming us." It is important to note that only human beings can praise God for the latter, because Jesus only redeemed human beings. Only human beings can sing the song of Moses and the Lamb:

"And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God,
and the song of the Lamb, saying,
'Great and marvelous are Thy works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.
'Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?
For Thou alone art holy;
For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE
THEE,
For Thy righteous acts have been revealed.'"
(Rev.15:3, 4; New American Standard Bible)

The statement "all the nations will come and worship," is a statement of unity. When the "righteous acts" of the Lord have been fully preached and appreciated, there will be true unity of worship and the prediction of Isaiah 45:23 will be fulfilled.

"I have sworn by Myself,
The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness
And will not turn back,
That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance."
(See also Rom. 14:11 and Phil. 2:10.)

1 Thessalonians 4:3 tells us that the will of God is our sanctification. 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Does this mean every human will be saved so they go to heaven? No, in spite of what many have come to believe, there will be people who will be lost. The message of 1888 says that:

"... the Word of God teaches--that 'the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.' Titus 2:11, RV. God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given it to him; but the majority spurn it and throw it away. The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to every man and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession." [1]

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be many who follow the way Pharaoh chose after receiving information from Moses that the God of heaven, Jehovah, existed and was in control of events on the earth.

"Although each of the Egyptian plagues increased Pharaoh's stubbornness and hardness of heart, he and his officials had to admit that the plagues were acts from 'the finger of God' (Exod. 8:19), and they let Israel go free to the promised land (Ex. 12:31-32)." [2]

Pharaoh finally relents and tells Moses and Aaron: "Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, 'Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said.

Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also" (Ex. 12:31, 32).

Notice that Moses and Aaron had consistently told Pharaoh they wanted to leave to "worship." Imagine how different it would have been if Pharaoh had acknowledged that all people belonged to Jehovah instead of telling Israel to "get out from among my people." All Egypt could have joined in worship together as the people of Nineveh did when their king led them in repentance. This could have happened but Pharaoh chose to "spurn" the blessings which would have come to him and his people. All people, even those that God had given to Pharaoh to rule over, are in reality God's people.

After depriving his people of the blessings of worshipping together with the people God had chosen, Pharaoh selfishly asked that Moses and Aaron "bless me also." This is an acknowledgement that he, Pharaoh, the mighty leader/god of Egypt needed blessings from Jehovah.

At the end of time, we are told that every knee shall bow, admitting the sovereignty of Jehovah, but like Pharaoh, they will eventually seek to attack and kill God and those whose faith in Him is genuine and humble. The Egyptians could not have participated in unified worship of the true God without acknowledging the gods they had made for themselves were impotent to save them.

Modern Israel makes the same mistake today when we insist on adding anything to our righteousness than what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us. But, if we are crucified with Christ, and not worshipping through our own efforts, there will be unity of worship among us.

--Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] E. J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 14; CFI ed. (2016).

[2] Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, second ed., p. 478; Andrews University Press (2009).

Chapter 51

Church Organization and Unity

The only times we read that Jesus mentioned His "church" were twice-- Matthew 16:18 and 18:17. He used the word *ecclesia*, which means "called out," a people designated and separated from the world, defined and denominated in a form that the world could recognize as an entity.

The apostles called ancient Israel a "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), and we read that Israel was a visible organization that the world could see as God's denominated people.

Paul thought of a beautiful illustration of what the church is--it's a "body." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular ... in the church" (1 Cor. 12:12-28). In his brilliant depiction of the relationship of the church and its members to Christ, Paul considers the church to be the "body of Christ" which "is not one member, but many" (vss. 27, 14). "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (vs. 12). "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, ... The body is not one member, but many" (vss. 13, 14). Paul describes the corporate unity of the church.

There is no English adjective that can be used to describe this relationship of the body to the head, or of the various members of the body to each other. Hence it is necessary to employ a Latin derivative as an adjective to describe this "body" relationship: *corporate*. (The word comes from the Latin *corpus*, meaning "body.") For example, "all the members of that one body, being many, are one body" (vs. 12). They bear a corporate relationship one to another.

In Revelation 12 we see the history of the true church and the identification of the "remnant" church. Through the ages she is symbolized as a "woman." After the horrors of 1260 years of papal persecution, she emerges as from a tunnel, now identified as "the remnant": "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (vs. 17).

With the end of the Dark Ages, inventions began pouring out of fertile minds. The horror of slavery began to be abolished; the little nation of ex-British colonies began to prosper in the New World; Christian people awakened as from a long sleep--the second coming of Christ was near. The world had embarked on what the Bible describes as "the time of the end." A preparation for the return of Jesus Christ became to intelligent people a reasonable "blessed hope." Through unmistakably divine leading, the message began to go worldwide.

Hearts responded and capable people did things. Clearly blessed by the Holy Spirit, a message joining together the gospel of Jesus with the ideals of healthful living worked wonders in tired, sickly people; the world's finest health institution (for then) was established in Battle Creek, Michigan, where even European royalty crossed the Atlantic to come. There the "West's" finest Christian publishing house was established. What the apostles after Pentecost longed for seemed to be on the verge. A solemn but joyous sense that the world had entered into the cosmic Day of Atonement gripped hearts worldwide. The "blessed hope" of the imminent return of Christ made life here below a taste of heaven.

For a century and a half that church has been identified by divine inspiration as the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which had its roots in the Great Disappointment of 1844 and the reformations that followed in succeeding decades until its formal organization in 1863. Throughout the

years of Ellen White's long lifetime, she constantly identified the Seventh-day Adventist Church as that "remnant." Yet even in her day there were unfaithful leaders and pastors who taught error and even apostasy, whom she rebuked, corrected, and sometimes even denounced.

Then it was discovered that Christ's message to the seventh church of history had become applicable: the church was "Laodicea," the one whose worldly lukewarmness made the Lord so nauseous that He felt like throwing up (Rev. 3:14-21). Now a battle rages in people's minds and hearts: is that last organization into a "body of Christ" doomed to eventual failure? Or is a corporate repentance possible (and sure)? Can the dream be recovered?

The 1888 General Conference brings us to our modern times; we learn that our own brethren virtually "rejected Christ" and "insulted" [1] the Holy Spirit in negative reactions against the message that was the "beginning" of the latter rain. This also occurred before any of us were born; but it is not enough to write off this history as past and not realize how we would do the same if we had the "opportunity" unless we specifically repent of that sin.

The Lord Himself, not an official committee nor an independent ministry, will "shake" this church, cleanse and purify it. But He has to have human agents with whom to work. The reason why the final events have not yet taken place may well be that those who do "sigh and cry" are doing so negatively instead of positively. To "sigh and cry" does not mean to wring one's hands in despair; it means to do something to help. Of ourselves we are powerless to stem the rising tide of evil, but we can seek to save every soul that our sphere of influence may touch.

All believers in Christ need the discipline of fellowship with a larger number of brethren and sisters whose association can be used by the Holy Spirit for the maturing of their Christian experience. (The Lord sees that one way we must learn to "gather warmth" is from "the coldness of others." [2]).

May we plead with the Lord, in this time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, to grant us the precious gift of corporate repentance--the discernment to see how the sins of others would be our sins but for the grace of a Saviour, to discern how they could be our sins if we were subjected to the same pressures and temptations they have had to meet. We need Christ's righteousness 100 percent, not less. When He has a people who can so humble their hearts before heaven, He can begin to work.

The bottom-line issue is denominational repentance. The "bride" of Christ is repeatedly declared to be His church. She has indeed been unfaithful to her true Lover, but she can repent. Many in leadership have maintained for decades that "we" do not need such repentance; other despairing people have maintained that denominational repentance is needed but is impossible. But Christ calls for it; His vindication requires it; our history demonstrates the need for it; and prophecy assures it.

Does it seem impossible that a spirit of contrition shall be poured out on a leadership congested by organizational complexity? The more involved the church becomes with its multitudinous entities, the greater is the danger of its huge collective self-choking the simple, direct promptings of the Holy Spirit. Each individual catching a vision is tempted to feel that his hands are tied--what can he do? The great organizational monolith, permeated with formalism and lukewarmness, seems to move only at a snail's pace. Aside from this "Spirit of grace and supplication," the nearer we come to the end of time and the bigger the church becomes, the more complex and congested is its movement, and the more remote appears the prospect of repentance.

But let us not overlook what the Bible says. We need to remember that long before we developed our intricate systems of church organization, the Lord created infinitely more complex systems of organization, and yet "the spirit ... was in the wheels" (Ezek. 1:20). Our problem is not the complexity

of organization; it is the collective love of self. And the message of the cross can take care of that!

--From the Writings of Robert J. Wieland

Endnotes:

- [1] Examples of Ellen White's use of these expressions are: *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 30; *Through Crisis to Victory*, pp. 279, 280, 290, 301; *Special Testimonies to the Review and Herald Office*, pp. 16, 17; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 96, 97, 294; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 472; MS 24, 1890.
- [2] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136.

Chapter 52

Final Restoration of Unity

Think of it!--the resplendent KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS coming in the clouds of heaven, surprising His enemies in the very act! He will come to rescue those who are loyal to Him. Then the moment of truth will have come for all earth's inhabitants.

The Book of Revelation pictures that final scene: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14).

"I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no one knew, but He Himself. He was clothed with a [robe] dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. ... Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 19:11-15).

For centuries, millions have endured--and continue to endure --wars, plagues, crime, grinding poverty, and unending fear. No one can say that God has brought this awful load of suffering on the world--man has done this!

Should not God be "democratic" and allow this planet to go on living in rebellion against His government and His universe? There is a ready answer. He has already done so--He still waits since the fall of man in Eden, hoping for repentance and reconciliation. He cannot and has never abandoned any "remnant" of His people who appreciate His character of love and respond

accordingly. They are the ones who rightfully "inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

But now in this present day, God looks down upon the earth and sees as plainly as we do that man has nearly ruined this habitat. It is evident that selfishness and sin make human life almost intolerable in many nations on earth.

The Lord tries again and again to save us. He is pleading in the most sublime, compassionate language, saying to every human soul, "'As I live,' saith the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways! For why will ye die?'" (Eze. 33:11). Love could not be more eloquent, or more persistent.

How will the lost feel when at last they actually see the face of Him whom they have persistently resisted and rejected? For those who have urged and supported the mark of the beast, just to look in His eyes will itself be torment "with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 14:9-11). The original language expresses the idea of their beholding in a flash the awful reality of their having rejected the One who suffered hell in order to save them. They can't stand it. The horror of their final realization of guilt tortures every cell of their souls.

The Lord never intended that the sight of His loving face should do that to anyone. While it is true that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29), it is only to sin that the revelation of His love is so destructive. If a human being persistently clings to any sin as a vine clings to a tree, the physical sight of Him who is love incarnate must also be instant destruction.

But Jesus promises that "the pure in heart ... shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). They "shall dwell with the devouring fire, ... with everlasting burnings" (Isa. 33:14). As Christ walked in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace with the three

Hebrew youth who believed Him, so He will save those physically who have already permitted Him as Saviour to save them spiritually from sin.

The enemy will capitulate. Even Satan himself at the end of history will openly, publically confess before the inhabitants of earth, and the intensely interested universe, his hopeless rebellion, and welcome the destruction that will mean that the great controversy is finally over: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!'" (Rev. 5:13).

The second coming of Christ is not the end of happiness or of our delight in the flora and fauna of earth, but the beginning of a renewal of life without pain and death, both for man and for the planet: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. ... The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, ... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," saith the LORD (Isa. 65:17-25).

In the final judgment every human being will see that God could not have been more fair, more patient, more compassionate than He has been: "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. ... And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:16-19).

Rightly understood, the world has never heard any better good news than the glorious second coming of Christ: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this

present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:11-14, New International Version).

What a bargain for "all men"! This godly grace has already come to you. The hardest thing we have to do is to say "No" to sinful temptation, but this grace actually teaches us to say it.

Believe the powerful good news, and immediately the second coming becomes your "blessed hope." "It ... will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay" (Hab. 2:3, NIV). At any time when He comes, the waiting will seem to have been short!

Worldwide, "the grace of God" is working night and day "to purify for Himself a people that are His very own." The nightly TV anchors may not tell us about this, but it is the most important news in the world, and it is good.

--Paul E. Penno