

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Making Friends for God:
The Joy of sharing in His Mission

Lesson 1: Why Witness?

When we are changed by the grace of God, charmed by His matchless love, and redeemed by the power of Christ, we cannot be silent. We long to tell the story of Christ with others.

Let's spend a few weeks looking at each lesson during this quarter in the light of the 1888 message which God has given us to give to the world.

The Bible tells us that God would very much like for everyone to go to heaven, because He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:3-6). The Father and the Son personally love each person on earth, no matter how much he may have sinned. The Holy Spirit says to each one, "Come" (Revelation 22:17).

The idea that Christ is running the special "shop" of salvation here, and He stays inside like a shopkeeper until the sinner takes the initiative to come seek Him out, is not what the Bible says! We must mention two reasons for this:

First, Christ is the Good Shepherd who does not wait for the lost sheep to try to find its way home again; He always goes in search of it: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The lost sheep may be lost out on the hills on a wild, stormy night; no matter. The Good Shepherd leaves His "ninety and nine" and at the risk of His own life goes out in the wildest storm imaginable through the mountains "until He find it" He goes "after that which is lost, until He find it" (Luke 15:4).

Second, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Don't imagine that you can save yourself, or that you have grown up on the right side of the railroad tracks so you are naturally almost saved on your own; if the Lord were to leave us to ourselves, we would be hopelessly lost.

Think of a shepherd of sheep; he has had a hard day, he is tired and hungry; his wife has cooked his favorite roast for supper; but as he counts his sheep, he finds that one is not there; it's out somewhere in the mountains.

A wild storm is brewing; she says, "Come and rest and eat your supper, you have 99 sheep, are they not enough for you?"

But he can't rest and eat; one sheep is lost.

So out in the wild storm he goes, maybe looking all night, cold and hungry; he must find that one sheep!

And who is it? You personally, and me personally.

No human being can possibly believe until first of all he hears the good news. You cannot originate faith within yourself apart from understanding God's love. No one has a self-starter. We cannot make our own atonement apart from the revelation of Christ.

Even faith itself is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher ... [of] glad tidings of good things! ... Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:14-17).

The moment you hear the smallest beginning of that good news, make a choice immediately to believe it. Don't delay even a moment.

The evangelist who has understood "the third angel's message in verity" (the 1888 message) has the glorious privilege of being the one who tells it so it grips hearts. He forgets himself; he is caught up in the whirlwind of the Holy Spirit, whether his audience is large or small. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:27, 28; compare Song of Solomon 4:15).

This glorious final movement began at the 1888 General Conference Session at Minneapolis, but it was disliked, shoved away, and "in a great degree" rejected and "kept away" from both "our people" and "from the world." [1]

Doesn't it make good sense to recover the message as the "messengers," A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, brought it, the ones who were given "heavenly credentials"?

When the gospel is presented in the light of the great cosmic Day of Atonement, and the truths of the cross shine clearly, Pentecost can be repeated. The apostles brought to the people the conviction that they had crucified their Lord of glory, and yet there was forgiveness for them. Then only they could truly fear the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, the apostle Paul notes that some people think he's crazy for wearing himself out in service for Jesus; (he calls himself "a slave of Jesus Christ" Romans 1:1), but he explains that a new motivation has possessed him. "The love of

Christ constraineth us.” And it’s not a shallow sentimentalism, for he says “we judge thus, that if One died for all, then all died” (*New King James Version*).

That’s a reasonable, common-sense deduction! One-dying-for-all means that if One had not so died, all would be dead. (He clearly saw that the “death” Jesus died was his own second death.) And from that common-sense deduction, Paul’s soul is moved with such total gratitude that “henceforth” he can no longer live unto himself; “I am crucified with Christ” becomes his daily heart-choice. No ugly fear clouds the pure flame of his devotion. He is a “slave” of love, a heart appreciation of what it cost the Son of God to save him from hell itself.

—*Paul E. Penno*

Endnote:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 234, 235.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYjlsN2IDNg>

Many of Pastor Penno’s sermons are on YouTube in Spanish. Just type **pastor paul penno en español** in the search bar.

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