

***Sabbath School Today***  
**With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

***“Feed My Sheep”*: *First and Second Peter***  
**Lesson 13. Major Themes in 1 and 2 Peter**

Consider the case of the church member who lives in a hedonistic culture. The gospel has been preached unto him; he is intelligent, he understands it; he believes it (or says he does); but he doesn't live it, doesn't render obedience to the Lord in ways he knows are God's will for him. He nods his head to every sermon or Bible study. Yes, and comes to church. But just doesn't do the things that the Bible says to do. What's wrong?

Some have tried to help him with portrayals of the “time of the end,” and the coming “seven last plagues,” and the horror of the “mark of the beast.” It just doesn't faze him.

Ellet J. Waggoner, one of the 1888 messengers of the gospel whose mind was guided by the Holy Spirit, says of this kind of case: “I still insist that you don't believe.” What does he mean? There is something defective in his idea of justification by faith. Waggoner goes on: “The price that was paid for us was [Christ's] own blood—His life. ... ‘redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:18, 19). ... He ‘gave Himself for us’ (Titus 2:14), ... ‘for our sins’ (Gal. 1:4). ... ‘While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:6, 8). ... The price paid was infinite.” [1] In other words, it's impossible to believe this and go on transgressing the will of God in your life—“you don't believe,” says Waggoner.

When Peter writes that we are “redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ” it was God's Messiah, of the Old Testament prophecies, who died. An unfortunate view of some regarding the Messiah is that we have a divine Savior who ministered on earth for 33 years, and then, when it came time for Him to die as God's sacrificial Lamb, He withdrew His divine self so that only a human corporeality paid the price.

But the corrective to this is found in Peter's response to Jesus' question, *Who do men say the Son of Man is?* Peter replies, “Thou art the Christ, the *Son of the living God*” (Matt. 16:16). It is the *Son* of God who died and paid our ransom from slavery to death. Divinity did not die. The Christ is the “lamb without blemish and without spot” who died.

Why did Peter and John call Him the “Lamb of God”? Is He only the human son of Mary, or is He indeed the divine Son of God? John says further that He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Is the Lamb the Son of God? Peter says the blood of the Lamb is “precious” and that could hardly be said if the Lamb is merely human. “Ye were redeemed ... with the *precious blood* [life] of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish ...” (1 Peter 1:18-20).

Due to their belief in the natural immortality of the soul, Evangelicals and Catholics believe that only the human Christ died. Some even deny this, boldly stating, "Christ did not die on the cross!" Their belief requires the understanding that Christ went to "Paradise" "today" with the pardoned thief, so that He did not really die on the cross at all.

Then what difference does the death of the Son of God make with regard to God's forgiveness of sinner's obtained at the cross? The 1888 concept of justification by faith provides us with a greater appreciation for what it cost God's Son. Herein lies the motive power for our faith which works by His love. Ellen White saw something in it that Luther and Calvin never saw: It "is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." [2] That was no superficial statement on her part, for "*agape* is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). "Precious blood" is that which "having not seen, ye *love*; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8, 9).

In other words, genuine justification by faith is "rooted and grounded in *agape*," because faith is a heart appreciation of it. Catholics and Protestants cannot clearly see this beautiful truth. Why?

No one who believes the natural immortality of the soul can possibly have an adequate appreciation of *agape*—"adequate," in the sense of preparing the grain for the harvest. We are not talking about those millions or billions who have prepared for death—Adventism is concerned about a preparation for translation at the second coming of Jesus, or it is nothing.

Martin Luther believed the truth about the nature of man and thus could begin to break down the synthesis of *agape* and self-centered love that Augustine had developed. But his followers reverted to the pagan-papal doctrine, as did Calvin, and even the Wesleys.

Parallel with the Day of Atonement comes a restoration of *agape* [3]; but the popular churches do not see it, though they use words for love. The theologians such as Anders Nygren, Michael Harper, or Leon Morris in their books on *agape* are not able to sense the real significance of what happened on the cross. But *agape* is a revelation of truth that comes only from Christ's ministry in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. [4] The popular churches do not by faith follow Him there; and thus, they cannot comprehend *agape*, because they believe in the natural immortality of the soul. The Evangelical doctrines of justification by faith therefore cannot comprehend the full truth of the cross of Christ. They cannot understand how He died the second death for the human race.

It is not possible to understand the length, breadth, depth, and height of *agape* while one believes in the natural immortality of the soul. If Christ knew that He needed only to endure a few hours of agony before being re-united with His Father in a disembodied

spirit, that would destroy the meaning of the cross. In reality, He saw the cavern of an eternal grave stretching before Him, with no hope of a resurrection.

Who is that One Person of all history who has been in hell? Actually, He came out of it again, which no one else will ever do once they get there! At Pentecost, Peter said that David spoke of Jesus, “Thou wilt not leave My soul *in hell*, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:25, 27). So Christ went all the way to “hell,” the second death in order to pay our ransom.

Conservative Christians are steeped in the idea that we must be punished for our sins, we must pay the price. But Peter teaches the idea known as the gospel, a concept of good news that says that Christ has already endured the punishment for our sins. He has paid the price, “exhausted the penalty” [5], because “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “His own self [He] bare our sins in His own body ... by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). “Christ ... hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). What does that mean for the world of sinners? Christ has already borne his or her punishment. It is over! There is now no fearful looking for judgment. According to Peter, if only the sinner can hear and believe this good news he will be transformed by Christ’s forgiveness.

—Paul E. Penno

#### **Endnotes:**

[1] E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, Glad Tidings ed., pp. 83; 79, 80 (1999).

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

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

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 340.

#### **Notes:**

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

<https://youtu.be/WXBFRjtMMdk>

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