

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

Preparation for the End Time **Lesson 4. 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.

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/57tKse7Zh6E>

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