

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

Redemption in Romans **Lesson 7: “Overcoming Sin”**

Are we in the midst of the historical crisis of the ages? Yes! The return of Christ is being delayed. Our Lesson on “Overcoming Sin” is very serious!

A father may have a heavy problem trying to support his family, but the little child has no understanding of it that hinders or shadows his play. The little child can sense only his own individual suffering of hunger. As it says, his “personal metabolism allows” no more. He can never “splice into” his father’s anguish, or “feel a spasm of [his] pain, [or] a prick of [his] woe.” A little child cannot “feel corporately” what a parent feels corporately for him.

But a woman who is grown up “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness” of a man (see Eph. 4:13) can feel corporately for him if she loves him as a bride loves a husband. Could it be that our cosmic problem is troubling to the heart of God because we are that prophetic “woman” who is still in the kindergarten state of heart and has resisted “growing up”? Can we not yet corporately share the heart-burden her Savior feels? Is our concern still fundamentally only self-centered? Do we still consider (as we have in the past) that our own individual, personal salvation is the greatest concern in the universe? Or can we begin to sense a concern for Christ Himself?

His name is still “Emmanuel, ... God with us” (Matt. 1:23). He is still one of us in humanity as well as one with the Father in His divinity. Ellen White declared in 1904 that as the consequence of the dark history of 1888-message-rejection “in a great degree,” “the disappointment of Christ is beyond description” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 15). The Loud Cry has been long delayed.

Our lesson this week lifts our thoughts above our preoccupation with our own salvation to the possibility of sensing a concern for Jesus in the great controversy for His sake, beyond our little sake.

“Christ felt corporately at the Cross” all the combined anguish of humanity. But is it fair that we sense no corporate involvement with Him in His anguish and His sacrifice—not that in any way we assist in our personal salvation, but our minds and hearts can begin to appreciate what it cost Him to save us. We must not be content to remain forever in our kindergarten comprehension. The “most precious message ... the Lord sent to His people” in 1888 began to emphasize that heart-concern for Jesus as transcending our selfish concerns in this “great controversy.”

Paul was deeply impressed that Christ expects, or at least hopes, that those for whom He died the second death will “come out” of the egocentric milieu of “Babylon” with its

Old Covenant radius of self-concern, and begin to “feel a spasm of His pain, a prick of His anguish.” “Know ye not,” Paul says, “that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?” That must mean some kind of personal involvement. “We are buried with Him by baptism into death. ... We have been planted together in the likeness of His death. ... Our old man is crucified with Him. ... If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:3-8).

“I am crucified with Christ,” he tells the Galatians (2:20). It’s over and over “with Him.” That is corporate involvement on the part of believers. It is in the sense of heart appreciation, entering “into” His experience by something the Bible calls “faith,” heart-involvement with the Son of God in His divine career as Savior of both the world and of the universe. “The government” of the universe is “on His shoulders” (Isa. 9:6; we can’t “lift,” but we can appreciate the weight He carries!).

A young pastor just out of the theological seminary, sincere and earnest, was interested in preaching the gospel as Good News to his congregation. He had a concern: is there a danger in preaching too much about the cross, and the grace of Christ, and His love, and not balance that by preaching also enough about the law, and obedience, and duty? He doesn’t want to be pastor of a lazy congregation who take advantage of “cheap grace” and clothe their religion with a thin veneer of love and grace which covers hypocrisy.

Should we believe what the Bible says: “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20); “cheap grace” is a counterfeit message, a detour around the atonement of Christ; you can’t preach too much about the genuine grace that “abounds much more” than all the sin the devil can heap upon a congregation. If what Paul says is “the preaching of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18) is clearly presented to a congregation, sin and hypocrisy cannot flourish among them because that grace conquers sin and eradicates it. The “power” is in the gospel itself, not in the law (see Rom. 1:16). And Paul says, Don’t doubt, pastor! “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. ... Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?” Says Paul: That’s impossible! (See Rom. 6:14, 15).

Being “under grace” is different than many superficial people imagine: it means you are under a new motivation imposed upon you by a deep heart-appreciation of what it cost the Son of God to save you from hell itself. There is where you see “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of the love of Christ at His cross (Eph. 3:18). That motivation is far stronger than all the fear-motivation you can use to assail your congregation.

The pure, true gospel is not a perfect so-called “balance” between faith and works; it is a message of faith *which* works. How many “good works”? Infinitely more than legalism can ever produce! Don’t be afraid to preach salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9).

—Paul E. Penno

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/EX0V3aFNa50>

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