

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

### ***Oneness in Christ*** **Lesson 9: The Most Convincing Proof**

*Is it possible to sort out the truth in this cacophony of voices that we hear today? Jesus says yes: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Ellen White also voices an encouraging yes: "The house of Israel [the organized church] is to be imbued with the Holy Spirit, and baptized with the grace of salvation. Amid the confusing cries, 'Lo, here is Christ! Lo, there is Christ!' will be borne a special testimony, a special message of truth appropriate for this time, which message is to be received, believed, and acted upon. ... Falsehoods will be urged upon the attention of God's people, but the truth is to stand clothed in its beautiful, pure garments" (Review and Herald, October 13, 1904).*

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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.

#### **Notes:**

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

[https://youtu.be/CSXig2A\\_fV4](https://youtu.be/CSXig2A_fV4)

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