

WHAT CHRIST HAS GIVEN YOU

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A nagging sense of hunger disturbs many. “I wonder if the 1888 message is important enough to take my time?”

Yes, it is. It’s what the hungry Adventist heart worldwide is yearning for.

The reason why hits you like a clap of thunder. That message was the “*beginning*” of a *Spirit filled explosion unprecedented since the day of Pentecost*. It was the initial “showers of the latter rain from heaven.” It was Good News refreshment for which drought-stricken hearts everywhere were famished.

It was to “lighten the earth with glory.” Yes, a light must penetrate to Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism, paganism. A “voice from heaven” must get through to every human soul, “Come out of Babylon, My people,” fulfilling the long-awaited prophecy of Revelation 18. There was to be a “mighty” fourth angel added to our present logo of the three angels pictured on every Seventh-day Adventist church and school.

At this point you are taking a deep breath.

Is the message *that* important? Since the first-century apostles turned their “world upside down,” no message has ever done a work like this, although the 1844 Midnight Cry came close. The Lord seriously wanted to prepare a people *right then* to meet the final issues of earth’s history. The agenda was not “Get ready to die,” but “Get ready for translation.”

Rather disturbing, to say the least.

But His message was not a terrifying, thunder and lightning demand, “Do the impossible!” Instead of a fear-laden do-it-yourself works trip, it was a faith-experience. Like dew falling on parched crops, the message was a gentle shower of grace which “abounded much more” than all the abounding sin the devil could invent. It captured one’s heart. Lights of joyous hope began to go on, because one saw the character of God in a different way. Ellen White described it like going around a corner and coming face to face with Jesus smiling at you, not frowning, “a Saviour nigh at hand, and not afar off,” taking you by the hand and saying, “Come, *let’s go to heaven.*” Bible Good News aroused a sunlit dream in discouraged hearts. It was astounding! Teenagers were won. God was not trying to find a way to keep you out of heaven, but to get you ready to go in. Every dark page of the Bible began to glow with Good News light.

Should not such a message meet with a tumultuous welcome from “us”? Yes, it should, and the shepherds’ news of the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem should have brought the priests down en masse from Jerusalem to welcome Him. But something strange happened with “us,” as with them. Except for a tiny minority of its hearers, the message met the same reception from “us” a century ago that Jesus got from the Jews two millennia ago. An inspired voice said that if He had been there in person physically, “we” would have treated Him as they treated Him.

What was the message itself?

Was it only the ordinary Evangelical teaching that we've heard all our lives, "Jesus loves me this I know, we must try harder to be good. We sin, and then Jesus forgives us; why re-invent the wheel?" Some of our own scholars have sincerely maintained that the 1888 message was only a "re-emphasis" of 16th century Reformationist teachings, or of the Evangelicals of our day.

But scratch the surface, and a different picture shows. Ellen White saw that the 1888 message went far beyond the popular Sunday-keeping churches. It was "the third angel's message in verity,"¹ "new light," "a message which is present truth for this time,"² "light from heaven,"³ "the light

¹ "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity."—*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890. Ev 190.3.

² "While men have slept, Satan has been stealthily sowing the tares. Let the watchmen now lift up their voice like a trumpet, and *give the message which is present truth for this time*. Let them know where we are in prophetic history, that the spirit of true Protestantism may awaken all the world to a sense of the value of the privileges of religious liberty so long enjoyed." RH, January 1, 1889 par. 11.

³ ". . . that which was *light from heaven* has been called excitement." 1888 1210.1. Letter EGW to US 11-30-93.

"Go on a little longer as you have gone in rejection of the *light from heaven*, and you are lost." 1888 1341.2. Letter EGW to O. A. Olsen 57, 1895.

"There is no virtue in refusing to receive the light which God shall send; we need every ray of light from heaven. We should appreciate the love of God which sends the light, and should accept the light joyfully." 1888 1536.1. Letter EGW to S. N. Haskell. H-056 05-30-96.

which is to lighten the earth with its glory."⁴ It was not only that Jesus pardons sin; *He saves from its power and slavery even now*. There is hope even for addicts. It was the most thorough gospel message the modern world has heard, because it was rooted in the cleansing of the sanctuary truth. Here are some of the outstanding ideas that the 1888 message recovers.

1. It was a refreshing idea of justification by faith. The usual idea a century ago (and today) was that justification by faith is only forgiveness or pardon for past sins, a legal maneuver on God's part that clears one of guilt, but leaves the believing sinner in neutral gear. There is no real progress in overcoming sin until sanctification. But the 1888 message saw far more. What rejoiced Ellen White's heart when she heard it is that justification by faith makes the believer obedient to all the commandments of God.⁵ It does what many think is done only

⁴ "The truth as it is in Jesus will be efficacious in converting souls to God. The holy truth is always to be presented in its true simplicity; for in this time, when the end of all things is at hand, the way of the Lord is to be prepared, the third angel's message is to lighten the earth with its glory." RH, June 23, 1891 par. 6.

⁵ "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the *sacrifice* for the sins of the *whole world*. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All

in sanctification. You don't have to wait for sanctification to find what it takes to keep those commandments! In genuine justification by faith your heart is reconciled to God; it is not a mere judicial declaration of acquittal for past sins. Such a clearer understanding means that you *already* enjoy victory over sin, because it is impossible for one's heart to be reconciled to God and not at the same time be reconciled to His holy law.

This powerful truth of practical godliness rests on a firm foundation of another one that is refreshing:

2. *The message was a new look at the cross of Christ.* The first beginnings were an 1882 "vision" in which young E. J. Waggoner caught a glimpse of

power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.

"The uplifted Saviour is to appear in His efficacious work as the Lamb slain, sitting upon the throne, to dispense the priceless covenant blessings, the benefits He died to purchase for every soul who should believe on Him. John could not express that love in words; it was too deep, too broad; he calls upon the human family to behold it. Christ is pleading for the church in the heavenly courts above, pleading for those for whom He paid the redemption price of His own lifeblood. Centuries, ages, can never diminish the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice. The message of the gospel of His grace was to be given to the church in clear and distinct lines, that the world should no longer say that Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, the law, but do not teach or believe Christ." *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.

the cross as the center and substance of the third angel's message.⁶ When Christ gave His blood for the sins of the world, *He redeemed the lost human race*. No one is exempt from intimate involvement, because "He, by the grace of God, [tasted] death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). In other words, He died every person's second death, his final punishment for sin.

And He did all this before we had any chance to say yes or no. Jesus has involved Himself with every human soul at the deepest level of his being, that hidden source of his intimate personal fear of eternal death. Christ's sacrifice has already "delivered" him from that fear which has enslaved him through "all [his] lifetime" (vss. 14, 15). (The sinner can resist and reject, and thus be lost, for Christ will force no one to be saved).

Isaiah says, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of *us all*." Paul says He is *already* "the Savior of *all*

⁶ "Many years ago, the writer sat in a tent one dismal, rainy afternoon, where a servant of the Lord was presenting the Gospel of His grace; not a word of the text or texts used, nor of what was said by the speaker, has remained with me, and I have never been conscious of having heard a word; but, in the midst of the discourse an experience came to me that was the turning point in my life. Suddenly a light shone about me, and the tent seemed illumined, as though the sun were shining; I saw Christ crucified for me, and to me was revealed for the first time in my life the fact that God loved me, and that Christ gave Himself for me personally. It was all for me. . . . One line runs through the entire Bible, God's everlasting covenant. Standing at the Cross, one can see the working of God's eternal purpose, which He purposed 'in Christ before the world began.'" E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, preface.

men, especially of those who believe.” And John adds that He is the “propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world*” (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Timothy 4:10; Romans 5:16-18).

Does Christ do nothing for us until we initiate the process and elect Him to be our personal Savior? Is He only a *possible* Savior, with a big IF . . . ? Must the sinner do something first, like believe, or obey the commandments in order to make Christ become his Savior? Do we function as our co-savior, helping to save ourselves? No, says the 1888 message: Christ’s sacrifice is more than merely *provisional*. It is *effective* in that He has purchased our present life and all we possess and are; and more, He has purchased eternal salvation for us and *given us the gift in Himself*.⁷ (But we can reject it after He has done His part.)

The spiritual paralysis of lukewarmness comes from deep within us, thinking of Christ like a bank that does nothing for you until you first make a deposit. He is impersonal, distant, you must take the first step. In other words, your salvation depends on your own initiative. In contrast, Christ has already deposited

⁷ “To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

eternal life and all its blessings to the undeserving credit *of your account*. It is yours already “in Him.” Now cash the check and realize the blessing *by faith*. Such “faith works by love” and itself produces inward and outward obedience to the One who has given all for us. All this is in the experience of justification by faith.

This means that the only reason any soul can be lost at last is that he has resisted and rejected what Christ has already accomplished for him. By unbelief he has deliberately thrown away the gift that God put in his hand. Such unbelief is the sin of sins, but it is the world’s universal sin. To state it another way: if anyone is saved at last, it will be due to *God’s initiative*; if he is lost at last, it will be due to his own initiative. Stop *resisting* His grace.⁸

Why is this so important to understand? Because fear as a motive is not strong enough to prepare people for the coming of Christ. It may wake someone up temporarily, but that’s all. There is a higher motive which Ellen White describes:

The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us

⁸ Cf. *The Glad Tidings*, p. 42; “The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God’s dear Son” *Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

through fear to right action? This ought not to be. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion.⁹

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, . . . and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul.¹⁰

3. But there's more Good News. Christ's sacrifice has reversed for all men the "condemnation" which came upon us all "in Adam." He literally saved the world from the premature suicide that sin would have brought upon us. So every loaf of bread comes stamped with His cross. "Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and blood of Christ."¹¹ When this grand truth comes into focus, we see it all through the Bible:

"The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life *to the world*. . . . The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give *for the life of the world*" (John 6:33, 51).

God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing. . . .

⁹ *That I May Know Him*, p. 320.

¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 660.

And again, the gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man's sin; for the judicial action, following upon the one offence, issued in a verdict of condemnation, but the act of grace, following upon so many misdeeds, issued in a verdict of acquittal. . . . It follows, then, that as the issue of one misdeed [Adam's] was condemnation for all men, so the issue of one just act [Calvary] is acquittal and life for all men (Romans 5:15-18).

Here is power to motivate!

The practical result of believing this Good News? In experiencing justification by faith, we already experience a change of heart. We were on the outs with God, at enmity with Him; now we see Him as a Friend. In other words, we have "received the atonement," which means we are reconciled to Him (vss. 7-11). We've been redeemed from eternal death! It's like someone long on death row who gets a last-minute reprieve. So, says Paul, "present yourselves to God *as being alive from the dead*." The burden is lifted from the weary heart when such "peace with God" flows in. From now on, no sacrifice is too difficult to make for the One you know has already saved you from hell itself.

Such love constrains one to live for Him, so that it becomes actually easy to be saved and hard to be lost. This Good News idea is an essential part of the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness (Matthew

11:28-30; Acts 26:14).¹²

Is it too good to be true? Someone will ask, “Does Ellen White agree?” The answer is that she loved this Good News. Her favorite illustration was Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation which on January 1, 1863, declared all the slaves in the Confederate territories legally free; but none knew *experiential* freedom until he heard the news, believed it, and acted on it. Ellen White saw that this gospel message spelled the end of our worldwide lukewarmness. This kept her awake at night for joy.¹³

¹² *Lessons on Faith*, pp. 11, 82-85, 132, 133.

¹³ “With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race” *Ministry of Healing*, p. 90.

“I was able to sleep but a few hours. . . .

When I stated before my brethren that I had heard for the first time the views of Elder E. J. Waggoner, some did not believe me. I stated that I had heard precious truths uttered that I could respond to with all my heart, for had not these great and glorious truths, the righteousness of Christ and the entire sacrifice made in behalf of man, been imprinted indelibly on my mind by the Spirit of God? Has not this subject been presented in the testimonies again and again? When the Lord had given to my brethren the burden to proclaim this message I felt inexpressibly grateful to God, for I knew it was the message for this time.

“The third angel’s message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness” *1888 Materials*, p. 217.

“I have had the question asked, ‘What do you think of this light that these men are presenting? Why, I have been

4. Now comes another blessing. Coming now into sharper focus, justification by faith *is seen as much more than a legal declaration of acquittal. In making the believing sinner become obedient to all the commandments of God, the blessing includes the sabbath commandment.*¹⁴ *The seal of God is the secret of overcoming those many addictions that plague the sinful human race.* It becomes impossible for anyone who truly believes the gospel to go on living in sin, which is transgression of the law of God.¹⁵ Many sincere Sunday-keepers will gladly begin to keep the seventh-day Sabbath when they see it in this relationship with justification by faith and the cleansing of the sanctuary which began in 1844. We are told the Sabbath truth fails to bring conviction to hearts unless it is joined to this cleansing of the sanctuary.¹⁶

presenting it to you for the last 45 years—the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen.’” *EGW 1888 Materials*, p. 349.

¹⁴ *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 51-67; Jones, *Review and Herald*, November 10, 1896, January 17, 1899.

¹⁵ Waggoner, *Signs of the Times*, May 1, 1893.

¹⁶ See Ellen White series of articles in *Review and Herald*, January-April, 1890; “As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he (Elder K) occupies the same position as the Seventh Day Baptists. Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses

5. But there's a problem. All this still leaves a hook on which to hang a doubt until we can grasp what faith is. Is it a self-motivated grasping for the reward of heaven, with a combined fire escape from hell? Owning a beautiful home here on earth involves an egocentric-motivated desire, which (we can say) is OK. But when one becomes a Christian does he simply transfer his desire for equity in real estate to an even better place in heaven? *If so, such motivation is still mired in self-interest.* And self-interest can arouse only a measured devotion, which is lukewarmness.¹⁷

The 1888 message revealed a new and higher motivation—a concern for the honor and vindication of Christ, as a bride feels for her husband. It transcends her own selfish desires. *Faith is revealed as a heart-appreciation of the great love revealed at the cross, irrespective of our desire for reward or fear of hell.* All self-centered motivation is transcended.

Such “faith . . . worketh by love”—no end of good works for a lifetime and eternity!

6. And still more Good News to come. All of us are sick spiritually and need a physician for our

its power; but when connected with the message of the third angel, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and brings them out with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 337.

¹⁷ *Lessons on Faith*, pp. 9-33; “This true priesthood, ministry, and sanctuary of Christ in heaven is too plain in the New Testament to be by any possibility denied. Yet, in the face of all this, it is a thing that is *hardly ever thought of*; it is a thing almost unknown and even hardly believed in the Christian world today” A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way*, p. 87.

souls. Jesus had to undergo special training to qualify as our great High Priest (or Divine Psychiatrist):

“As the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death [the second] He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. . . . In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15)

The word translated “destroy” means “to paralyze.” True, Satan is not dead yet, but when you believe this Good News, he is paralyzed.

7. Christ as a High Priest has come so close to us in taking our human nature that He knows the full force of all our temptations. He “resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” Whatever your temptation, however low you have fallen into sin, however terrible is your feeling of despair, however poisoned your guilt, “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them.” He is on duty in the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary 24 hours a day, and never sleeps

(Hebrews 12:4; 7:25).

It's as if you are the only patient this Physician has; He gives you His full-time attention. Imagine yourself as a sick person being the only one in the hospital with the full staff of doctors and nurses serving you! That's *you* in Christ's intensive care unit! *Believe* how good the Good News is, and your life is changed from the deepest inside out.

This is only a brief preview of the refreshing Good News in this "most precious message."