

**THE TIME IS FULFILLED,
AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IS AT HAND; REPENT AND
BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.**

MARK 1:15



REPENTANCE

1888 MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER
Spring 2018



1888
MESSAGE STUDY
COMMITTEE



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The gospel of Jesus Christ is the central truth of the Bible and the most effective means of winning souls for Christ. This newsletter is designed to provide resources that will aid in sharing the Good News through personal and public evangelism.

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Gerald Finneman

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“The Everything Home Improvement Machine”

Robert Hunsaker

Imagine I invented the ultimate home help, home improvement machine. Put dirty clothes in and out they come moments later clean, dry, and folded. Put dirty dishes in the same machine and out they come in a few minutes clean and dry – no matter how hardened the food was on them! In other configurations, with a few handy attachments, the machine will vacuum, sweep, and wax the floor. It will mow the lawn – and edge it! It recognizes the difference between weeds compared with grass and shrubs – and only sprays Round-Up on the weeds. It can make the bed, clean the shower, clean the refrigerator, and remove the trash. It’s the ultimate home helper! (P.S. Any resemblance to your spouse is incidental and unintended.)

If this machine were available for a reasonable price, wouldn’t you avail yourself of it? The time and money and energy saved over time could be channeled into so many other vital enterprises. It would revolutionize the way we do “house”.

Well, while there is no “ultimate home improvement machine” that I’m aware of for the home, there is something just as powerful and effective in the Adventist church “home”. Are you aware that just as I described a home machine that does nearly everything for the home,

there is a theological truth machine that does nearly everything needed for the church – in one package?!

Look with me at a quote that you are probably familiar with. But don’t let your familiarity cause you to miss the depth and breadth and power of what this theological truth “machine” contains. Forget you’ve read this quote before, and let all its richness speak to you again:

“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. . . . 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.” {TM 91.2}

Notice the treasure trove of vital truths, events, and experiences contained in this message – this ultimate church mover machine:

1. “uplifted Savior, the sacrifice for

the sins of the whole world” – this message has universal implications for every individual on planet earth – we can ALL know how God thinks and feels towards us – individually and universally

2. “justification through faith in the Surety” – we can discern the healing remedy for ALL that ails the world! Marriage and family problems, interpersonal problems at work or in the neighborhood, societal ills from violence to substance abuse to relational infidelity to racial division – the solution is the same!
3. “receive the righteousness of Christ . . . manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God” – imagine a world where everyone related to everyone else the way Christ related to everyone!!! Courtesy, respect, encouragement, faithfulness, patience, generosity, energy, interest – these are “righteousness” and these are “obedience”.
4. “message that God commanded to be given to the world” – this message is Matthew 24:14 and Mark 16:15 – this message is the “gospel commission” – whatever we’re giving to the world in our doctrinal package, if it’s not this message of the uplifted Savior, justification through faith, and the righteousness of Christ, then we’re not fulfilling the gospel commission.
5. “the third angel’s message”, “proclaimed with a loud voice”, “attended with the outpouring of His Spirit” – the three angel’s messages, the fourth angel’s message,

the Loud Cry message, and the Latter Rain – ALL INCLUDED HERE!!! Think about the eschatological significance of what’s being communicated! God gave us in the messages brought by AT Jones and EJ Waggoner, and endorsed by Ellen White, the 3 angels, the 4th angel, the Loud Cry, and if accepted, the Latter Rain. This “1888 message” was truly intended to be God’s “bring things to a final conclusion” message.

It’s true – isn’t it – that God has given us EVERYTHING we need to bring the misery of this great controversy to an end. Have we discerned it? Have we appreciated it? Or, like so many of our spiritual forbears, have we treated the beautiful and the sacred as if it were common and mundane?

God has blessed us with “every spiritual blessing”, with “every good and perfect gift”. May we not receive His grace in vain. May we recommit ourselves to be faithful to Him and the truths He has entrusted to us, as He has been fully faithful to us.

*Every
good and perfect
gift is from
above*

James 1:17

“The Goodness of God”

The Signs of the Times, December 7, 1888

E. J. Waggoner

The expression, “God is good,” is one that is in very common use among Christians, yet we are morally certain that very few receive the benefit from it that they might. To very many the expression brings more dread than trust, and the reason is that they have an erroneous, or at least a limited, idea of what is meant by the term “good.” They connect goodness with sternness or inflexible justice, having an incorrect idea even of justice. Many people look upon a good man as one who is so far above the common lot of people that he cannot sympathize with them. They feel as though he could not make any allowance for their infirmities. As a matter of fact, the opposite of this is the case. But with this false idea of goodness, it is no wonder that men are repelled from God. **Be it known, however, that God does not repel any.** Those who feel that they cannot approach God, have only themselves to blame, for the Bible declares that the goodness of God leads to repentance. Romans 2:4.

From this passage it is evident that the term “goodness” includes more than simple stern virtues. Says Paul, in the passage

just referred to: “Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” To be good is to be kind and loving as well as virtuous.

This quality of goodness is brought out by the apostle in Romans 5:7: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.” Some might think this is a contradiction, but it is not. The words “righteous” and “good” are entirely different. The idea is that no matter how upright a man may be, no matter how honest, one would scarcely die for him; but some might be found who would be willing to die for a benevolent man, one whose whole life has been devoted to acts of kindness to others.

In the above paragraph we came near using the term “law-abiding” to express the character of the righteous man, whose virtues did not draw people to him in tender love. It would not have been really wrong to do so, for righteousness is right-doing, conformity to the law. And yet **the righteousness which is not thoroughly perme-**

ated with kindness and tender love, is a righteousness that springs more from compliance with the letter of the law than with the spirit of it; for “love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10. The law of God is a law of love, for God is love.

In the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul gives some of the qualities of love, which is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God. “Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” All that God requires of us is conformity to his own character, yet we are exhorted to be “kind one to another, tenderhearted.” In so doing we approach most nearly to the character of God, for He is the pattern of tenderness that is set before us. We are to forgive one another even as God hath for Christ’s sake forgiven us.

“God is love.” This does not mean that God has love for his creatures, but that He is love itself. Now since God is love, and His law is simply a transcript of His character, it follows that goodness is tenderness; and when people feel to shrink from God because of His incomparable goodness, it shows that they are yet strangers to true goodness. Take all the knowledge you have either by experience or imagination, of kindness, gentleness, tenderness, and

love, and multiply that by infinity, and you have the goodness of God which leads to repentance.

Perhaps the words of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 5:19 may make the matter plainer to some: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The whole world unites in praising the gentleness of Christ. He “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” Acts 10:38. **The character of God is a most lovable one.** How He sympathized with the suffering and the sinful! At the grave of Lazarus He wept; when He saw the multitude scattered as sheep having no shepherd, He was moved with compassion; when the loathsome leper came to Him, He shrank not away, but touched Him, imparting at once with that touch of sympathy and love both healing and forgiveness; and how wonderful is the tender compassion that is manifested in His dealing with the woman taken in adultery. Most of all does His love shine out at the close of His earthly career, when for those who had reviled Him, mocked Him, spit upon Him, scourged Him, mangled His head with thorns, and brutally crucified Him, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!” Who that rightly considers His life and death can fail to be drawn towards Him?

And yet, “God was in Christ.” Christ was here simply as a representative of the Father; and so perfect was the resemblance that He could say, when asked to show the Father: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” John 14:9.

The goodness of Christ is the goodness of the Father. Who can help feeling that the call, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” is like the reaching out of the mother’s arms for the tired child to nestle in her bosom? And yet when Christ uttered those words it was the voice of the Father speaking through Him. So we see that the goodness of God, which leads to repentance, is gentleness; **for tenderness, and gentleness alone can win, and God draws sinners to Him.** And this gentle goodness not only leads to repentance, but clothes the soul with strength, as David sings in the following wonderful verses:-

“He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by



mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation; and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great.” Psalms 18:34, 35.

How much sorrow and unrest we get to ourselves from our failure to rightly understand the goodness of God! “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

“For the love of God is broader Than the measure of man’s mind; And the heart of the Eternal IS most wonderfully kind. [December 7, 1888 EJW, SITI 742.11]

“If our love were but more simple, We should take Him at His word; And our lives would be all sunshine, In the sweetness of our Lord.”


Repentance
is a change of heart and mind
that brings us closer to God.


“Modern Revivals”

The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, October 18, 1898

A.T. Jones

The Baptist Standard of August 25 has an article on the revivals of the present time, as compared with those in the earlier history of the church. In speaking of the revival work on the day of Pentecost, the writer says:—

It was in those days that the divine pattern for revival work and revival experience was seen in the strongest exhibition of divine love and grace. The Holy Spirit had such sway over the hearts of sinners that with deep concern and great alarm they cried out, and sought to know what they should do to have their hearts and lives changed.

This was the Lord's pattern of a revival, and its fruits was evident. I do not say we have entirely departed from this pattern, but there is every evidence that in a large measure the saints in their revival work have drifted from the example and pattern of the living God. The Lord's word does not and can not change; grace can not change; repentance can not change; the blood in its power to cleanse from all sin can not change; the new birth in its nature and fact can not change; and faith that appropriates the whole truth of the living God can not change. Therefore, why do we see so frequent and

extensive revivals, with so little evidence of concern on the part of those who are named in the discipleship of Jesus, and of the conversion of sinners after the divine pattern? Are we drifting away from the word of God, its truths and requirements? Is it not strange, with the Bible in our hands, and its truths so patent and clear, that so many enter the door of church life, and give so little evidence of vital knowledge and union with Christ, or have even a semblance of heart experience in the Christ-life?

The reason that these things are so is given by Paul, in 2 Tim. 3:1-5. We are in the last days of the gospel age. This is told by every sign that the Bible has given. The world is fast hastening on to its final ruin. Those who should be holding up the standard of truth have partaken of the spirit of the world until their religion is now made up of forms and ceremonies. They have a form of godliness, but deny the power. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” To deny the power of godliness is to deny the Holy Ghost. But the call of the Lord is, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” This is the great need of the church. And the same power will bring the same results as of old.



Rescued!

Patti Guthrie

I went down to the moorings of
the mountains; The earth with its
bars closed behind me forever;
yet You have brought up my life from
the pit,

O Lord, my God.

When my soul fainted within me,

I remembered the Lord;

And my prayer went up to You,

Into your holy temple.

Salvation is of the Lord.

--Jonah 2:6, 7, 9 (last part) NKJV

Have you ever fallen into a hole?
Did you need help getting out?

Imagine what you would feel
like if somehow you managed
to get stuck in a hole 2,300 feet
(almost one half mile) under-
ground! Pretty scared, right?

That's just what happened to 33
miners in a copper and gold mine
in northern Chile several years ago.

These men were working deep
below the earth's surface when the
main ramp leading into the mine-

-and their only way out--collapsed.
They were trapped. With only three
days' supply of food, they would
have to ration it very carefully. It was
hard for them not to give up hope.

Above ground, day after day passed
with no word from the miners. Were
any alive? Was there any hope?

Officials began drilling down
into the ground to see if they could
find the men. Seventeen days
later they discovered a handwrit-
ten message taped to the end of a
drill bit. The message read, "We
are well in the shelter, 33 of us."

Families of the trapped miners
rejoiced at the news that they were
still alive, but undertaking the
rescue was risky and uncertain. The
officials would need the coopera-
tion of the men to accomplish their
release, the miners were told.

A five inch hole into the mine be-
came a lifeline of hope. Through that,
the miners received food, water, and

supplies. Down below, the men prayed together and maintained order in their group, encouraging one another and carefully following the instructions they received.

The plan involved drilling a hole wide enough to allow passage of a capsule that would be lowered into the shelter. One by one the men would be raised to the surface in that capsule. It took 22 1/2 hours to accomplish this task. After 89 days of being buried alive, all 33 miners were saved. More than one billion people around the world rejoiced as this story unfolded on live television.

Praise the Lord! God heard these men's prayers.

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to earth to rescue us from a pit much worse than just a hole in the ground, awful as that may be.

To rescue the Chilean miners, someone from above ground had to climb into the capsule and be lowered 2,300 feet into the shelter to retrieve one miner at a time.

To save us, Jesus came all the way to where we are, lost and without hope in this world. He defeated Satan. Jesus said no to every temptation, including Satan's appeal to save Himself.

No, Jesus would rather give up His own life and die the forever death on the cross than be saved without us.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16.

Salvation is of the Lord.



The Repentance of Jesus

Jerry Finneman

Matthew chapter three records John the Baptist baptizing people in the river Jordan (v 6). His baptism was known as one of repentance (v 11). People came to John confessing their sins and presenting themselves for baptism (v 6). When some religious leaders came to be baptized, John refused them the rite. (vv 7-10). He called them a “Brood of vipers” (v 7). He saw through their poisonous hypocrisy and called for genuine fruits of repentance which were absent from these pretenders.

Then Jesus came. John, at first, likewise refused to baptize Him but for different reasons (v 14). This refusal was because he sensed the purity of the life of Jesus. But Jesus told him they were to “fulfill all righteousness” (v 15) in the baptism of Jesus. Jesus, in submitting to the rite of baptism, was declaring that He was repenting of sin. But He was holy. So why this baptism? Of course He did not repent because of sins person-

ally committed. But because Jesus is our Representative He repented for the corporate sin of mankind as well as our personal sins. John pointed to Christ in regard to corporate sin declaring, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“The sinner’s surety of full and free pardon lies in the fact that the Law-giver Himself, the One against whom he has rebelled and whom he has defied, is the One who gave Himself for us.”

Jesus “knew no sin,” was holy and undefiled, but He was “made...to be sin for us.” This was according to God’s purpose so that “we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was made to be sin itself for

us in order to justify us and to make us righteous in Him as our Representative, Substitute and Surety. Mrs. White presents Him in these offices:

After His baptism when He prayed He did so as our Representative. “Jesus was accepted of Heaven as a representative of the human race.” ST, July 28, 1890.

We are counseled to “lay hold

upon the meritorious blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. He is your only hope, He is your righteousness, your Substitute and Surety, your all in all." Faith and Works, 76.

As Creator and Lawgiver Jesus took full responsibility for the failure of Adam and all his descendants. Jesus did this as our Surety as well as our Representative. Waggoner wrote the following: "The sinner's surety of full and free pardon lies in the fact that the Lawgiver Himself, the One against whom he has rebelled and whom he has defied, is the One who gave Himself for us." Christ and His Righteousness, 45.

The word surety "was a legal term within the Graeco-Roman world, referring to someone who assumed an obligation in place of another." Faithlife Study Bible on Hebrews 7:22. This idea is carried forward to our time in the term "bondsman." A bondsman is one who provides bail (security) for the temporary release of a prisoner from jail. The bondsman guarantees the appearance of the prisoner in court at a date set by the court. If the one who was released from prison fails to show up for the hearing, the bondsman forfeits whatever he put up as security. In other words, he pays because of the failure of the prisoner who skips town. This illustrates the meaning of Christ as our Security. He became responsible for the failure of the human race.

This is outlined for us in Psalm 69. That this Psalm is one of many concerning Jesus is seen in verses 20-21 where we read the prophecy written about 1,000 years before the crucifixion of Jesus: 20) "Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21) They also gave me gall for my food, and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

Verses four and five read, 4) "Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head; They are mighty who would destroy Me, being My enemies wrongfully; though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it. 5) O God, You know My foolishness; and My sins are not hidden from You."

Here we perceive Jesus as our Surety. We observe Him repenting and confessing sins of which He never committed. For whom did He do this? For you. For me. For every human being.

There was the time when I preached this Psalm and after reading these two verses, I asked rhetorical questions, not expecting an answer. The questions were: "Have you ever searched your heart for sin and felt it was not good enough? Have you repented of your sins to the best of your ability and felt it was not good enough? Have you confessed your sins to God and felt this was not good enough? Sudden-

ly, from the congregation a woman weeping cried out from the depths of her heart, "Yes, every day!"

I was startled briefly, then said, "none of us have repented and confessed our sins perfectly. However, there was One who did. Jesus repented for your sins perfectly and He confessed our sins perfectly. So, when we search our hearts, repent of our sins and confess them to the best of our ability, Jesus wraps His perfect repentance and confession of sin around our repentance and confession and they are wholly acceptable."

After the service, the lady and her husband approached me with more questions. Both had been weeping. Both went away with the assurance of God's acceptance of them "in the Beloved." A short time later the elder of that church called and shared with me what the result of that meeting was. He told me he had never seen such a change in anyone like this. He said that couple was on fire for the Lord and that "they were unstoppable" in their witness for the Lord. The burden of guilt and condemnation was lifted from them by the bright beams of light from "the Sun of Righteousness."

This insight regarding Psalm 69:4-5 came from Elder Jones. He said it is "in Him we have exemption from Satan's discouragement as to whether we have confessed our sins hard enough, sought them out faithfully enough

or repented enough. In Christ we have repentance; in Him we have confession; in Him we have perfection, and in Him we are complete. O, He is the Saviour!"...

"We read here His confession of sin. This was He as ourselves and in our place, confessing our sins and we needed that also. He was baptized in our behalf, because no baptism on our part could be perfect so as to be accepted in righteousness. 'It must be perfect to be accepted.' No man's confession of sin can, in itself, ever be so perfect as to be accepted of God in righteousness, because man is imperfect. But 'it must be perfect to be accepted.' Where then, shall perfection of confession be found? Ah! In Him my confession of sin is perfect; for He made the confession." A. T. Jones, GC Bulletin, February 22, 1895.

Consider the following gems of inspiration regarding the repentance and confession of Jesus. "Christ came not confessing His own sins; but guilt was imputed to Him as the sinner's Substitute. He came not to repent on His own account; but in behalf of the sinner.... As their substitute, He takes upon Him their sins, numbering Himself with the transgressors, taking the steps the sinner is required to take; and doing the work the sinner must do." RH Jan 21, 1873.

Again: "He took upon Himself our nature, that He might teach us how to live. In the steps which the

sinner must take in conversion—repentance, faith, and baptism—He led the way. He did not repent for Himself, for He was sinless, but in behalf of man.” ST July 31, 1884.

And again: “Christ ... had taken the steps which every sinner must take, in conversion, repentance, and baptism. He Himself had no sins of which to repent, and therefore He had no sins to wash away. But He was our Example in all things, and therefore He must do that which He would have us to do.” ST May 27, 1897.

And yet again: “After Christ had taken the necessary steps in repentance, conversion, and faith in behalf of the human race, He went to John to be baptized of him in Jordan.” GC Bulletin, Apr 4, 1901.

When Jesus came out of the baptismal water of repentance He knelt in prayer for Himself and for the fallen race. “He asks for the witness that God accepts humanity in the person of His Son.” DA 111. Quickly the answer came. “Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature, the voice from heaven declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal.” DA 112.

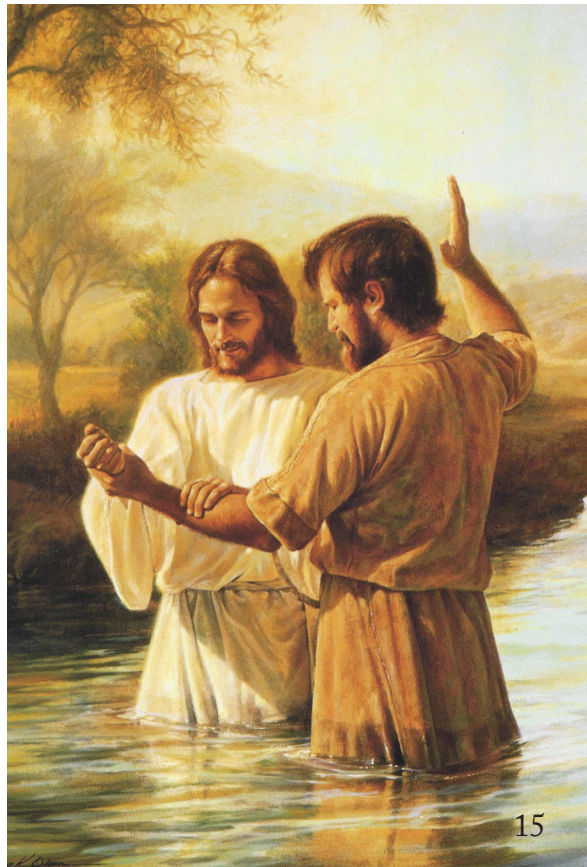
“And the word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,’ embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. ‘He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.’ Ephesians 1:6. The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us.” DA 113.

What a baptism.

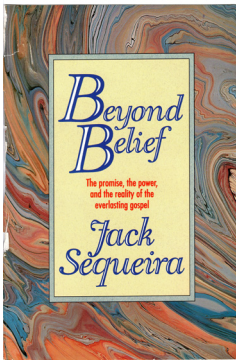
What a confession.

What a repentance.

What a Savior!

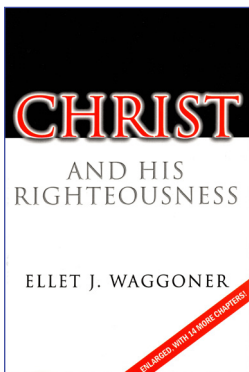


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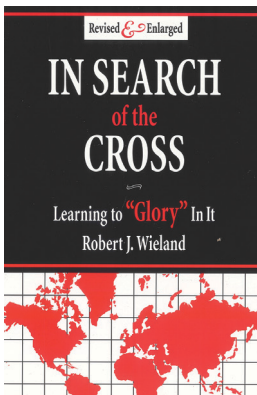
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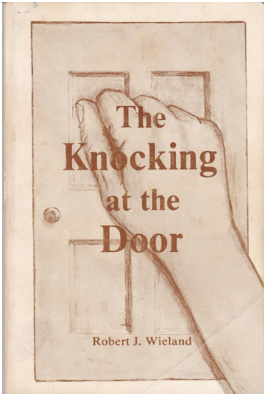
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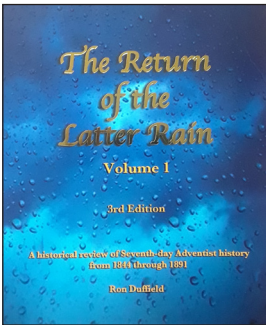
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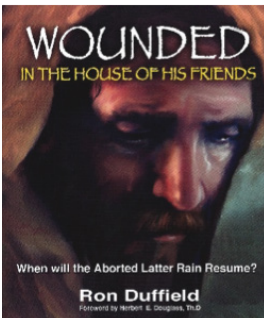
Knocking At the Door Robert J. Wieland

Could it be that a deep-seated unconscious sin has caused the church to keep the bridegroom knocking at the door for over a century? Christ's address to Laodicea is applied to the strange reluctance to respond to His loving invitation that came in 1888. The basic idea turns out to be disturbing, even shocking. This book brings hope and suggests a solution. 114 pages \$9.95



Return of the Latter Rain Ron Duffield

A historical review of Seventh-day Adventist history from 1844 through 1891. As Ron Duffield, a fifth generation Seventh-day Adventist, reviews our history, our hearts will be strangely warmed as we see, perhaps as never before, that this great second Advent movement was raised up by God to give the latter rain message. 504 pages \$24.95.



Wounded Ron Duffield

A detailed look at our early brush with the power of the latter rain, the message that was being proclaimed and experienced and what the believers and unbelievers were doing to either prepare or block the showers of refreshing. 296 pages \$19.95

Corporate Repentance

Brian Schwartz

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 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. {TM 91.2}

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. {TM 92.1}

One of the greatest points of controversy that surrounds the 1888 history is whether or not the 1888 message was ultimately accepted by the leadership of the church at the Minneapolis conference or in the 1888 era to follow. Was the Minneapolis General conference a great victory? Was it a failure that has kept us in this world for many years? If the latter then what is our responsibility?

Was Ellen White's assessment accurate when speaking of AT Jones and EJ Waggoner and those who opposed them?

*I would speak in warning to those who have stood for years resisting light and cherishing the spirit of opposition. How long will you hate and despise the messengers of God's righteousness? God has given them His message. They bear the word of the Lord. **There is salvation for you, but only through the merits of Jesus Christ.** The grace of the Holy Spirit has been offered you again and again. Light and power from on high have been shed abundantly in the midst of you. Here was evidence, that all might discern whom the Lord recognized as His servants. But*

there are those who despised the men and the message they bore. They have taunted them with being fanatics, extremists, and enthusiasts. Let me prophesy unto you: Unless you speedily humble your hearts before God, and confess your sins, which are many, you will, when it is too late, see that you have been fighting against God. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, no longer unto reformation and pardon, you will see that these men whom you have spoken against have been as signs in the world, as witnesses for God. Then you would give the whole world if you could redeem the past, and be just such zealous men, moved by the Spirit of God to lift your voice in solemn warning to the world; and, like them, to be in principle firm as a rock. Your turning things upside down is known of the Lord. Go on a little longer as you have gone, in rejection of the light from heaven, and you are lost. "The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation." {TM 96.2}

I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ. Neglect this great salvation, kept before you for years, despise this glorious offer of justification through the blood of Christ and sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. I entreat you now to humble yourselves and cease your stubborn resistance of light and evidence. Say unto the Lord, "Mine iniquities have separated between me and my God. O Lord, pardon my transgressions. Blot out my sins from the book of Thy remembrance." Praise His holy name, there is forgiveness with Him, and you can be converted, transformed. {TM 97.1}

Did we as a people turn away the Holy Spirit and thus delay the second coming of Christ? Have we given the 3 angels' message in verity to the world? If not should we seek forgiveness? Should we repent?

Does the Laodicean message of Revelation 3 still apply to us as a people today?

The seven churches referred to in Revelation, were actual cities in Asia Minor. However, there were more than seven churches in this region, and although most likely John's letter was circulated to these churches and apply directly to them, it is also reasonable to conclude that the Lord chose these seven churches because they were typical of the condition of the church as a whole both in the time of John the revelator, as well as throughout the Christian era. Seventh-day Adventists have applied these messages to seven periods that cover the entire history of the Christian church. But as various aspects are applicable to any church at any given time they can also be said to be universal.

Ellen White applied this message to many in the Adventist movement as early as 1850

Many who profess to be looking for the speedy coming of Christ are becoming conformed to this world and seek more earnestly the applause of those around them than the approbation of God. They are cold and formal, like the nominal church, that they but a short time since separated from. The words addressed to the Laodicean Church, describe their present condition perfectly. See Revelation 3:14-20. They are “neither cold nor hot,” but “lukewarm.” And unless they heed the counsel of the “faithful and True Witness,” and zealously repent, and obtain “gold tried in the fire,” “white raiment,” and “eye-salve,” he will spue them out of his mouth. {RH June 10, 1852} {

The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world. AA 585.3

Accepting the application of the seven churches being representative of periods of time that represent the whole of the Christian era, we will focus on the seventh of the seven churches. This message begins in Revelation chapter 3 verse 14 and is known as the Laodicean message. It therefore applies to the church at the very end of time just before Jesus returns. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on its end time interpretation and make reference to the literal Church of Laodicea in John’s time.

Rev. 3:14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. **Rev. 3:22** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ”

Let’s begin with verse 14. This message is addressed to the angel of the church of Laodicea. The SDA Bible commentary notes that the Greek word *Aggeloi* means messengers, it could be confusing as John’s other uses

of the *aggeloi* refer to heavenly messengers and not to elders or overseers, however the Bible commentary notes that it is unlikely that God would send a message to literal angels through John and therefore identification of these angels as leaders of the church is the preferred meaning.¹

These words are spoken to the teachers in the church—those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So, with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Through them His light is to shine forth. The Saviour is to be their efficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to the Father they will be enabled to do His work. As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world. AA 586.3

As is the case in the preceding six churches, the opening sentence identifies the speaker as Christ Himself. He is the Amen², the Faithful and True Witness and is the initiator of all creation. Essentially the message comes with the highest credibility and is to be taken as truth.

Laodicea's water source was known to be lukewarm it was a particular problem experienced by the Laodiceans. Thus, they could especially identify with the allusion to lukewarm water. Many parallels can be made about a lukewarm spiritual condition of the angel to the church of the Laodiceans. While cold water can be refreshing to a warm traveler, and hot water can be soothing to someone who is chilled, almost no one desires lukewarm, tepid water for bathing or as a drink. The same can be said for ministers of the gospel who have a lukewarm gospel message. Having a form of godliness but denying the power. Such leaders are in a sluggish spiritual condition often indecisive and as a result their congregation suffers as well.

This lukewarm condition is nauseating to Jesus. While many offshoots have used this passage to make the case that Christ has cast off the Seventh-day Adventist church the Greek word *mello* is best translated as "I am about to spit you out." NIV.

Christ does not cast off the end time church for there is no eighth Church, what Jesus is expressing, is that He is made sick to His stomach by our lukewarm condition.

The reason why He feels like throwing up is because we haven't realized our true spiritual condition. To be continued...

1 Seventh day Adventist Bible Commentary Number seven Page 741

2 Isaiah 65:16 The Lord is called 'Elohe Amen' the God of Amen



Peter and Forgiveness: Part 7

By Fred Bischoff

In our journey of walking with Peter down the path of forgiveness by the faith of Jesus, we've watched a man who was alive because of the enormity of Jesus' forgiving love. Truly receiving and believing that love was everything to Peter, as it must become to us. On the way to the cross, as we have traced in earlier stories, Jesus kept giving to the end.

But we must ever remember that this is unselfish love. When reciprocated, Jesus' love makes us unselfish too, meek and lowly, repentant, humble, able to give as Jesus has given us, to forgive as Jesus forgives us.

For the benefit of Peter, and his friends then, as well as those afterward to be mentored by him as he was by Jesus, including us, the resurrected Jesus walked Peter through some steps of reinforcing and confirming both the lessons of that love, and the obligations it laid on Peter's heart, and on ours, in our ongoing repentance. Let's follow Jesus in this intriguing story, the last in our series. (Our final, future reflections will look in his epistles for the lessons Peter learned.)

Story #10: John 21: Peter's Humility--Embracing the Selflessness of Forgiveness

The Story

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth

the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. (verses 14-22)

Reflections

This story starts in a setting that echoes the beginning where Matthew, Mark, and Luke described Peter's first encounter with Jesus, net fishing from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:3-10; John 21:3-6). We have here another miracle of a group from the twelve, catching fish after a night with empty nets, but this time the net does not break, and on the shore a meal has been prepared by the master Fisherman, who had been training them for three and a half years in catching men. Christ's method of giving to win a response would alone bring true success in the art of soul winning. Perhaps it is significant that it is in Jesus' serving this last recorded meal they had together we find the last recorded use of a key word in the theme we have been tracing. "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them." (John 21:13). Their daily bread, which He had taught them to pray of the Father, a symbol of His continual presence and nurturing of their very life, they were to

learn to give to others. Were they seeing the simple but profound meaning in this third meeting with Him after the resurrection?

When the meal was finished, Jesus engaged Peter in some unfinished lessons on giving and forgiving. It appears they walked away from the group for this personal encounter, with John walking a short distance behind them. The core of this last recorded dialog between Jesus and Peter is in verses 15-17, a series of three repeating questions from Jesus,

responses from Peter, and resulting commands from Jesus. It is easy to conclude that Jesus asked three probing questions of Peter as a follow-up to his three-fold denial of Jesus during the night of His arrest in the garden, though that connection cannot be made in John's gospel as he records only two statements of denial. (18:25-27). Let us place the words in a table so we can better reflect on the elements of each question and statement.

Jesus' Initiation	Jesus' Question	Peter's Reaction	Peter's Response	Jesus' Conclusion
So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?	He saith unto him,	Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.	He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.
He saith to him again the second time,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?	He saith unto him,	Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.	He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.
He saith unto him the third time,	Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?	Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him,	Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.	Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Name Used for Peter

The Gospels do not record Jesus using Peter's names frequently to address him. The three ways Jesus did it are:

(1) "Peter": Mark said this name was a surname Jesus gave Simon. (Mark 3:16). Jesus is first recorded using it in Story #1, when He addressed him, "thou art Peter." (Matthew 16:18). In Luke's account of Jesus' warning him of his impending triple denial, Jesus again used this name, "I tell thee, Peter...." (Luke 22:34).

(2) "Simon": This original name for Peter Jesus used first in Story #4 in a question, "What thinkest thou, Simon?" (Matthew 17:25) Another question in Gethsemane contained it, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37). And finally just before Jesus' warning mentioned above after the last supper, He used it in a double appellation, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31). This faith of Jesus reaching out to strengthen the faith of Peter, and to give him a future hope and mission, provides an important connection to this last of our stories, for something had happened to Peter between the Lord's Passover meal with them, and this meal by the sea of Galilee, something that would enable him to give strength to others.

(3) "Simon, son of Jonas": Jesus used this more complete name when Andrew, Peter's brother, brought him to Jesus back at the beginning. (John 1:42). It is recorded only one other time, that in Story #1, "Simon Barjona." (Matthew 16:17). In our current story in the three questions Jesus posed, the actual Greek is very close, "Simon of Jonas" ("son" being supplied in the KJV). In reverting to Peter's birth identity, Jesus appears to be probing Peter's new identity. Was Peter still simply a "flesh and blood" son of his earthly father, or had he more fully embraced his new identity from "My Father which is in heaven"? In a culture where names often reflected character and could be changed when a person was transformed, Jesus from the beginning had worked on changing Peter's character, while preserving, as He does with us all, his individuality. This interchange in John 20 is clearly the climax, though not the end, of confronting that change. (Paul would later challenge Peter on a double identity issue; Galatians 2:11-13.)

Five Variations

The skeleton of repeated dialog in general terms is this:

Jesus: "Do you love me?"
Peter: "Yes."
Jesus: "Feed My flock."

The three verbal exchanges are identical except for five variations that flesh out this skeleton.

- (1) The Comparisons
- (2) The Two Loves
- (3) The Sorrow
- (4) The Two Knows
- (5) The Three Commissions

The above differences in the dialog do not appear to be present simply to avoid redundancy of words, of which there are plenty, but to make some significant points, half of which are not captured in the KJV and many other translations.

(1) The Comparisons

The first difference we note is that Jesus' first question about Peter's love included the comparative phrase, "more than these." This appears to be a clear test of Peter's claim in Story #7, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." By this statement Peter had made two comparisons. He would be more loyal than all others, and he knew his heart better than Jesus did. (We will consider the second one in variation #4.) But Peter was scandalized by Jesus' method of giving later that same evening. He and "all" the others were so offended they fled. Peter had returned shortly and "followed afar off" (Luke 22:54), but only to distance himself even further by his triple denial of identity with this Man who was giving Himself. By comparison and self-exaltation, Peter had failed to give the witness that flows from meekness, lowliness, and wisdom. Jesus wanted to test Peter on this

point. Peter's reply now simply avoided all comparison with his fellows. He had learned a key lesson in giving--that in relating to others self must be so low that it claims no advantage in loyalty.

(2) The Two Loves

Jesus used a different verb in His first question than Peter did in his response. Jesus used the verb form of agape, which is how God loved the world so much He gave the riches of heaven to it, this very Son (John 3:16) talking in His meekness and lowliness with Peter. It is also the verb for the first and second great commandments, to love God with all, and to love one's neighbor as self, even one's enemies. (Matthew 22:37, 39; 5:44). Peter in response, though beginning with a word of strong affirmation, "Yea," used a verb form of philia, which is the love of friends. It is not a bad word, for even the Father loves the Son with that love (John 5:20), and the love that flows from the Father to us, from Jesus to us, and from us to Jesus can be described with it. (John 16:27; Revelation 3:19). But it is clear that the loving of agape is more giving, more selfless, than that of philia. And Peter in his newfound repentant humility rightfully had learned another lesson in giving--that in himself he had not the highest level of love, the fully selfless giving that remains firm under all testing. When Jesus asked Peter the second time, without the comparative phrase, using the same love

of agape, Peter repeated exactly what he said before. His heart was leaning fully and humbly on Jesus. But in His third question Jesus switched to the love of philia, the verb that Peter himself had used in appealing to Jesus' knowledge, asking Peter if he loved Him with that love. And that is when the emotion of sorrow surfaced once again.

(3) The Sorrow

"Peter was grieved" that Jesus "said unto him the third time," Do you love Me with the love of philia? We noted in Story #7 that this dynamic of sorrow is always associated with selfishness, but, while present, that self focus is not always in the heart of the grieved one. Was Peter here selfishly fearing the loss of something as he had so often in the past, or sorrowing yet again at his own earlier selfishness that had caused him "the third time" to fail his Master? This triple failure had occurred twice in the crisis--once in the garden where three times he slept through Jesus' need for him to watch and pray with Him, and again at the trial where three times he denied even knowing Him. It appears Peter here has learned yet another lesson in giving--he is grieving here unselfishly for Jesus. Peter's thought that his own selfishness in doing what a true friend would never do, could have caused Jesus to question even his love of friendship, means Peter was entering more fully into Jesus' emotions, those heart dynamics that tested His

faith and love to their utter depths.

(4) The Two Knows

The second comparison that is hinted at in Peter's first response is that which Story #7 highlighted--not the offense that Peter would experience in Jesus' extent of giving, but the scandal of Peter's asserting that what Jesus predicted of him would not happen--that Peter knew himself better than Jesus did. The earlier outcome showed the inaccuracy of and damage from such a comparison. So now not only did Peter refuse to compare himself as loyal "more than these," he also simply confessed that it was his Lord that knew his heart. Twice he humbly stated it--"You know." Paul later would address the danger of the faithless measure and comparison of self-exaltation. "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12). This "not wise" is yet another form of "not know"--the inability to put things together. So when Jesus probed even more deeply Peter's form of love, Peter became more insistent that it was not his knowledge he was relying on. No, it is Jesus that "knows all things." Peter added not only that universal qualifier, but he used yet another verb "know"--that of personal experience, not his own but Jesus'. "You know by experience that I

have [at least] the love of friendship for You.” Peter had learned also the vital lesson in giving that it was only Jesus that knew him well enough to give him what he needed in order to be life-giving to others.

Before we consider the fifth variation, let us summarize what we could call Jesus’ focus in each test question, and Peter’s victory in each.

Focus of Jesus’ question	Peter’s victory
1. Comparison with others	a. Over comparison with others: no “more than” in reply b. Over self-knowledge greater than Jesus’ knowledge: “You know” c. Over any claim of highest love: only “love of friendship”
2. Highest love	Second victory over self-knowledge and over claiming highest love
3. Lesser love (Knowing, by implication)	Third victory over self-knowledge with even deeper knowing: “You know by experience”

(5) The Three Commissions

It was out of victory over self, out of learning the lessons of humility, self-distrust, Christ-centered emotions, and the knowing of divine love, that Peter received again what he had squandered. Jesus had recruited him to be a fisher of men. How many witnessing opportunities had he lost in his self-focus, like cutting off ears that Jesus had to heal in order for them to hear the good news in the midst of the taking and giving of Calvary? Jesus would give him that which he was now ready to pass on, at any expense to self. When Peter passed his first test, Jesus’ first

commission was, “Feed My lambs.” The verb is one of giving nourishment, what is appropriate to sustain life and growth. It is the picture of what God Himself does. “Thou givest them their meat in due season.” (Psalms 104:27; 145:15). Jesus had used this metaphor once before in replying to Peter’s question about one of His parables. “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42). We see here again the verb that traces our theme clearly--knowing what people need, and giving what is appropriate to the current situation.

Who are the recipients Jesus said Peter was to feed? The word “lambs” is actually a diminutive form of “lamb”--“little lamb.” All other uses of this noun form are found in Revelation, 29 times in 27 verses, referring to Jesus in His self-giving, self-sacrificing nature as fully revealed on the cross. It is that giving that truly nourishes people, as the bread and wine were to symbolize. Peter in his unselfishness could now give to the little ones as Jesus had given to him. In doing so to the “least of these My brethren” Peter would be giving to Jesus. (Matthew 25:40). We see a beautiful expression of how Peter must have done this in 1 Peter 2:2, 3. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

After Peter passed his second test, Jesus changed both the verb and object in His second commission, saying literally, “Shepherd My sheep.” It is the same action of caring oversight that Jesus is repeatedly said to do Himself, that will secure the universe forever against the deceptive food of false shepherds. (Matthew 2:6; Revelation 7:17; 12:5; 19:15; contrast Jude 12). What Jesus had given him, Peter entrusted to the elders he mentored. “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” (1 Peter 5:2). Paul used the same language in exhorting the elders and bishops of his day. (Acts 20:28). And Jesus stated all overcomers will share in

that caring, governing responsibility that self-giving love qualifies one for. (Revelation 2:27).

Jesus combined the first two commissions--the verb of “feed” with the inclusive “sheep”--in His third commission to Peter. In passing his third test, Peter could now in his new maturity know what every stage of development needed for nourishment. Jesus had restored him, a wandering sheep, to the flock, and to responsibility over the flock, to lead as Jesus had led him. He was able humbly and powerfully to instruct, and to express statements of confidence. “Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:25). Peter did not draw people to himself, but to the One that had mentored him. This we can see throughout Peter’s epistles, especially in his beginning passage.

Commentary

“The Saviour’s manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the undershepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care. Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him.” (The Desire of Ages, page 815.1)

Transition


In our future studies we will turn to Peter's epistles as windows into his life after Jesus returned to heaven. There we will probe for evidence that Peter had learned this "forgiving love." Had this grace of Jesus simply excused his selfish, proud, exclusive nature, or was it something of a much more pervasive character--not only the very foundation of his life but also his on-going identity as he battled to the end that fallen, sinful nature? Was this gift that Jesus gives able to grow Peter and those he mentored into the identity of a new nature through the path of ever-deepening repentance?

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If you have a study group, we would **LOVE** to list it in the next newsletter. Please **CONTACT** John and Barbara and give them as much information as possible. When inquiries are received regarding where and when groups meet, the details will be shared.

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