

## THE GOOD NEWS FOR LAODICEA

*Study Guide Three***The Problem-Solving Power of the 1888 Message**

Jesus says, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations....And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you....Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” (Matthew 28:19, 20; John 20:21, 22; 14:12).

These are fantastic promises! The key to their fulfillment is in that phrase, “he that *believes* on Me.” This is the phrase so often misunderstood by “faith-healers,” Charismatics, and charlatans who prey upon people’s self-centered motivations. We are told that Satan can work miracles and even give his followers “power.” But the presence of the counterfeit only proves that the genuine is available.

“He that believes on Me” means “he that has true faith,” the kind that “*works*” in righteousness by faith.

Surely it cannot be the will of the Lord that His church be almost impotent in the face of moral and spiritual plagues such as drug abuse, alcoholism, marital infidelity and sexual immorality, and widespread psychological depression. The increasing deterioration of the human spirit is bringing millions to the place where they are mentally unable to comprehend His everlasting gospel. He has promised “power” to cope with these tragic needs.

The loosing of the “four winds” is the complete breakdown of order, decency, morality, fidelity, and security. The Lord has instructed “four angels” to “hold” the “four winds” of human passion “till we have sealed the servants of our God” (Revelation 7:1-4; *Early Writings*, pp. 36-38). If His people will faithfully proclaim that message, He will do His part to restrain the exploding evil in the world. The gates of hell are not to prevail against His church on earth. But if the church does not faithfully proclaim the message that alone can prepare a people for the return of Christ, He cannot hold in check those terrible global forces of evil. Surely it was never His will that World Wars I and II should bring such sorrow and pain to the world, or the horrors common in many lands today.

An example is Africa. Before World War I broke out, an armed conflict engulfed South Africa, one that has left a bitter legacy throughout this century to poison almost that entire continent. Several times Ellen White declared that the Boer War of 1899-1902 would not have taken place if our early missionaries had faithfully proclaimed and exemplified the Lord’s message in South Africa (Ms 178, 1899; cf. Letter 187, 1899). The context of her concern was the 1888 message. The world has been starving for “the third angel’s message in verity.” and still is. The situation is serious.

That message “in verity” was the 1888 truth of Christ’s righteousness. The power was to be in the message itself, not in our institutions, budgets, or organization. God’s plan was that a small people would make a great impact on the world by proclaiming a message that Heaven could fully endorse. They would be like little David with five smooth stones facing Goliath.

Even today, a century later, those who study the message realize the unusual power that is in it. It carries its built-in “heavenly credentials.”

How a Pure Gospel Message Can Have Such Power**1. What power did Jesus give His apostles? Mark 16:14-18.**

**2. What impact did the early apostles have on the world?** Acts 17:6.

**3. What was the reason they could turn “the world upside down”?** Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; Romans 1:15, 16.

Note: The power was in the message, and the message was the gospel. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the early rain. It gave the apostles power, but it was not magic. Peter’s sermon at Pentecost reveals the source of their power: they understood what the cross means (Acts 2:23-37). They made it real to human hearts. The proclamation of that truth catalyzed humanity. One word did it—the word that embodied the powerful love of God—*Agape*.

Ellen White declared that the 1888 message was the beginning of the *latter* rain of the Holy Spirit, as Pentecost was the *early* rain. It was also the beginning of the loud cry of Revelation 18. Its power was intended to lighten the earth with glory. But it was not the works of men or the supposed revival of the church in the early 1890’s that began to fulfill the prophecy; it was the message itself--“the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer” (*Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892). There is in “the truth of the gospel” the most powerful force that can be exerted on human hearts, the power of that heavenly love (cf. Galatians 2:14).

**4. What were some of the human problems which the gospel of the apostles solved?** I Corinthians 6:9-11.

Note: These are the same problems that afflict the human race today. Each becomes a compulsive obsession or addiction. How were those problems solved? The answer is in the text: by the message of justification by faith.

It was more than a cold theological formula, it was a living truth. Sin abounded in the days of the pagan Roman empire. Romans were so violently cruel that they reveled in watching human beings fight with animals to the death. Prostitution was sanctified as a part of religion. But through the proclamation of the gospel, “grace did much more abound,” and reigned “through righteousness [by faith] unto eternal life” (Romans 5:20, 21). The message revealed the grace of God to people who were captives of all kinds of compulsive sin, including that of “abusers of themselves with mankind.” Thus it placed them “under grace,” and now a new compulsion made them captives of Christ. The result was a happy one. “Sin shall not have dominion over you,” said Paul, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace: (6:14). Even today, that message of grace conquers all kinds of sin when appeals to fear or hope of reward are helpless to motivate people to a true and lasting conversion.

**5. What truth does a message of grace emphasize?** 2 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 8:3, 4; Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:15.

Note: The apostles' message of grace proclaimed what is often neglected or denied within the church today—the truth of Christ's human nature being *like*, not *unlike* ours. What impressed those people was the reality of the Son of God coming “nigh at hand,” taking their nature and being tempted as they were, suffering in their place, accepting their poverty that He might give them His wealth, conquering their temptations by faith but with the same equipment they had. This truth was a revelation of purest grace, and it demonstrated a power that gripped human hearts as nothing had done in a previous history. The most hopeless captives of crime, lust and addiction found deliverance in this message of grace.

Needless to say, Satan opposes such a revelation and does all he can to suppress it within this church, and thus to keep it from the world. He is determined to make us believe that sin is invincible. We shall later devote an entire lesson to this “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” as it shone out from the 1888 message.

### *The Power in the 1888 Message*

#### **6. For a brief time after 1888, the precious message was proclaimed in our camp meetings and schools. What were the fruits?**

Ellen White said: “The present message—justification by faith—is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness” (*Review and Herald*, September 3, 1889). “I have never seen a revival work go forward with such thoroughness, and yet remain so free from all undue excitement. There was no urging or inviting. The people were not called forward, but there was a solemn realization that Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance....We seemed to breathe in the very atmosphere of heaven” (*Ibid.*, March 5, 1889).

“I saw that the power of God attended the message wherever it was spoken. You could not make the people believe in South Lancaster that it was not a message of light that came to them....God has set His hand to do this work. We labored in Chicago; it was a week before there was a break in the meetings. But like a wave of glory, the blessing of God swept over us as we pointed men to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The Lord revealed His glory, and we felt the deep movings of His Spirit.

“I have tried to present the message to you as I have understood it, but how long will those at the head of the work keep themselves aloof from the message of God?” (Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1890).

Note that it was not the personalities of the speakers, hierarchical pressures, promotional strategies or advertising, that had such “power.” *It was the message itself.*

#### **7. Has the Seventh-day Adventist Church faithfully proclaimed this “most precious message” to the world so that the sealing work could be done?**

Our fallible human judgment is not capable of answering this question. The objective answer is fourfold: (a) In summing up the end of the 1888 era, Ellen White declared that “Satan succeeded in shutting [it] away from our people, in a great measure,...and by the action of our own brethren [it] has been in a great degree kept away from the world” (*Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235). (b)

Writing nearly 40 years after 1888, A. G. Daniells said: “The message has never been received, nor proclaimed, nor given free course as it should have been in order to convey to the church the measureless blessings that were wrapped within it” (Christ Our Righteousness, p. 47). (c) The obvious fact of nearly a hundred years of history since the loud cry began very clearly declared that the message has not been truly proclaimed. (d) The message which we are proclaiming as a church can be objectively evaluated so that the contrasts between it and the 1888 concepts become clear to anyone.

But this is good news—to discover the reason for the long delay gives us hope. It is in our power to recover much of the message because the Lord in mercy provided for its being available in out-of-print books and periodicals.

#### **8. What is God’s plan for His remnant church? Joel 2:28-32; Habakkuk 2:14; Revelation 18: 1-4.**

Note: “In visions of the night representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God’s people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families....Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence” (*Testimonies*, Vol. 9, p. 126). What a glorious future! We must not let Satan veto it.

#### **9. What power will the pure, true gospel of the grace of God have on our personal, individual lives? 2 Corinthians 5:13-6:2,**

Note: The gospel of God’s grace had such power on Paul that people thought he was beside himself in his unmeasured devotion to Christ. He replied that it was not because he was made of more heroic stuff that he was able thus to suffer so much for His Saviour. The grace of Christ in His matchless love at the cross “constrained” Paul. That is, it motivated him, pushed him forward relentlessly, almost in spite of himself. Now he found it impossible to go on living for self. It made him a “new creation.” To be reconciled to God, to have the invisible barrier removed that had beclouded his soul all his life, was fantastic. The event of the cross captured him forever, and he pleads with us not to look at it and yawn in boredom. He says, “Receive not the grace of God in vain.”

The unique message of righteousness by faith that the Lord sent us in 1888 reproduces in modern human hearts the same selfless devotion that motivated Paul long ago. One of the few leaders who wholeheartedly accepted the message demonstrated such devotion. S.N. Haskell pioneered the message in China, Japan, Australia, and continued to bear the precious fruit of grace even into his old age. His books are still valuable.

“We ‘live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me’ Gal. 2:20. O, He loved me! When he gave himself in all his glory, and all His wondrous worth for me, who was nothing, is it much that I should give myself to Him?” (A.T. Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 351).

**10. With prayerfulness and hunger of soul, ponder anew the mighty power in the message of God's grace. Immerse yourself in** Romans 4:13, 16; 5:2, 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15.

Note what this treasure-passage says: (a) Righteousness by faith is not cold theology. It's the ministry of grace. (b) Faith provides access into this grace, that is, a heart appreciation of the love of God opens the gates of access to hope and glory. (c) "The gift by grace...hath abounded to many." "In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breath this life-giving atmosphere will live, and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus." (*Steps to Christ*, p. 68). (d) Grace is greater than our sin (that is stupendous! Believe it). (e) Believed and received, grace reigns in the life like a king. (f) Grace abounding makes it impossible for the believer to continue living in sin. (g) Grace thus imposes a new captivity which is and unending motivation to holiness of life.

**11. How can you be sure that you are included in this grace?** Titus 2:11; Ephesians 4:7, 12, 13.

Note: "Do you want to be like Jesus? Then receive the grace that He has so fully and so freely given. Receive it in the measure in which He has so fully and so freely given. Receive it in the measure in which *He has given it*, not in the measure in which you think you deserve it. Yield yourself to it, that it may work in you and for you the wondrous purpose for which it is given, and it will do it. It will make you like Jesus" (Jones, *Review and Herald*, April 17, 1894).

Salvation from sin certainly depends upon there being more power in grace than there is in sin....Wherever the power of grace can have control, it will be just as easy to do right as without this it is easy to do wrong.

"No man ever yet naturally found it difficult to do wrong...because man naturally is enslaved to a power...the power of sin—that is absolute in its reign....But let a mightier power than that have sway, then...it will be just as easy to serve the will of the mightier power.

"But grace is not simply more powerful than sin....There is much more power in grace than there is in sin....Just so much more hope and good cheer there are for every sinner in the world." (Jones, *ibid.*, September 1, 1896)