

Presentation-3, Fear God

This focus of this presentation will be on the expression “fear god”*

Revelation 14:7 states: “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God...”

The glad tidings is not only to be preached to all the world but loudly proclaimed with God’s Authority.

As confirmed in presentation-1,* **the Creator is none other than God-the-Father, who created all things through His only begotten Son. All are to render reverence, glory, and worship to God-the-Father and not the so-called “one God comprising the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons” as promulgated in the current SDA 28 fundamental belief item 2.***

Therefore the term “God” as used here refers to the Father.

Proverbs 8:13 very clearly states: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...”

The word “fear” used here is not in the sense of being afraid of God, but in the sense of coming to Him with reverence and awe, to trust and love Him, to come into His presence with joy. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God, of full surrender of the heart, of saying amen to His Will, of bringing our will completely into harmony with God’s Will. The fear of the Lord is that reverent attitude comprising love, awe, gratitude, and allegiance that distinguishes men who have realized their own nothingness and unworthiness; and with absolute faith, trust and confidence in the sanctifying power of God’s Spirit, have found salvation in God’s gracious plan.

This line of thought to regard God with profound reverence and have proper regard for His will is confirmed in* **Deut 4:10 which states “Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children”**

But man loves sin and in his carnal mind, in his fallen condition, is enmity against God and will not subject himself to God’s divine principles. Ever since man fell under the power of sin, he has followed the inclinations of the flesh, which have inevitably led to disobedience of God’s divine principles.* **He is incapable of hating the evil that is in him, although he is fully capable of enjoying the pleasures of sin and hating the evil in others.* The carnal mind is wholly incapable of submitting to the Will of God unless he dies to self and sin, and is born again to a new life in the Spirit.* Only by the transforming power of God’s Spirit is obedience again made possible.**

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Sin is indeed pleasurable as depicted in *

Hebrews 11:25: “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” Only by faith in the promises of God could Moses refuse the throne of Egypt with its associated pleasures of sin.

The Apostle Paul explicitly declares in Rom 8:7 that the carnal mind is wholly incapable of submitting to the law of God.* **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”.**

The depraved wickedness of deriving satisfaction from the evil practices is being emphasized by the Apostle Paul in*

Romans 1:32 where he wrote **“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”**

Many, if not all can easily relate to this sad and tragic condition in one’s life and experiences. How many times have we seriously purposed in our heart to forsake sin, and how many times have we failed, miserably? Without being judgmental, I believe each one of us is a witness to himself.

Anytime a man tries to find victory over sin, of himself, apart from the power of God, he is doomed to failure.

Recognizing the impossibility for sinners of themselves, to order their lives in harmony with the principles of the divine law, Christ points His people to the Source of power for Christian living. What they cannot do in their own strength can be accomplished when human effort is united with divine power.*

The sanctifying power of God’s Spirit shall not disappoint.

What the law cannot do, what the conscience cannot do, what unaided human strength cannot do, can be accomplished by the indwelling of Christ’s righteousness through His Spirit in the heart. Complete deliverance, which is not only hating iniquity but more importantly loving righteousness, is available from the Father through Jesus Christ and through Him alone.

Yes, the sanctifying power of God’s spirit shall not disappoint.

The fourth chapter of Zechariah illustrates that to hate sin and to love righteousness depends entirely upon the indwelling workings of the Spirit of God. Towards this end abundant divine

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provision has been made for everyone to receive His Spirit in all its fullness. Like Israel of old His purposes would be attained not by human “might” or “power,” but by His own Spirit and His own power. Even so shall it be in the last-days for His people.

The prophet Zechariah was shown in a vision a candlestick with seven lamps. There was no need for any of the lamps to become extinguished, because the two olive trees referred to as the two anointed ones, supplied oil to the central bowl, which in turn supplied oil to the lamps.

This vision clearly shows that all who are wholly consecrated to God’s service will always be supplied with a continuous supply of God’s Spirit.

As the LORD said to Zerubbabel, so He said in* **Zechariah 4:6 to His people: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”**

One should always fervently seek for more of God's Spirit. The obtaining of more of God's Spirit will always ensure greater success.

The same principle applies with respect to every other means by which men think to advance the kingdom of God. The power of numbers (perhaps like higher church membership?), the influence of the media, the leverage of wealth, the leverage of governmental powers, worldly patronage through affiliation with non-believers, are much sought after, but it is not by these that success comes. God's Spirit, His righteous character, is the one means by which His work of saving men can be carried forward. And the Spirit is given freely, without measure. Zechariah saw this in the vision of the two olive trees. No promise is more clear or more emphasized than the promise of the Spirit, especially so in the last-days, when the latter rain shall be poured out abundantly*.

Zechariah asked in 4:11 “What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?”

Zechariah enquired as to the purpose of the two olive branches in* **Zechariah 4:12 “What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?”**

The angels gave the answer in **Zechariah 4:14 “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth”**

We believe the two olive trees depicted here, the two anointed ones, the heavenly instrumentalities, are two of the four holy angels that stand in God's presence in the most holy place as depicted in the temple built by King Solomon. The cherubim in Solomon’s Temple were much larger than those in the ancient portable tabernacle, and were made of olive tree wood and then overlaid with gold. Their wings were stretched out to the full, so that the four wings,

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each 5 cubits long reached across the entire width of the Temple. The details of these two cherubim are given in 1 Kings 6:23-28*

Sister White gave a deeper insight into this vision in Testimonies to Ministers page 510. "From the two olive trees, the golden oil was emptied through golden pipes into the bowl of the candlestick and thence into the golden lamps that gave light to the sanctuary. **So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence, His Spirit is imparted to human instrumentalities that are consecrated to His service.** The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate light and power to God's people. It is to receive blessing for us that they stand in God's presence. As the olive trees empty themselves into the golden pipes, so the heavenly messengers seek to communicate all that they receive from God. The whole heavenly treasure awaits our demand and reception; and as we receive the blessing, we in our turn are to impart it. Thus it is that the holy lamps are fed, and the church becomes a light bearer in the world."

Without God's Spirit, as we have seen, numbers and wealth would have availed the ancient Israelites nothing, for their enemies is certainly stronger than they in both respects. But with God's Spirit working for them, the more opposition they met, the better they would get on. Everything would work together for their good even as the Apostle Paul wrote in * **Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."** And so shall it be with God's last-days faithful servants who love God, who are the called according to God's specific purpose of heralding the three angles' message to the world. At every step God's last-days remnant shall be in the hands of God and be carrying out the divine purpose. Nothing can touch them except by our Lord's permission, and all things are permitted work together for good to those who love God. If God permits suffering and perplexity to come upon us, it is not to destroy us but to refine and sanctify us. Prophecy is being fulfilled right before our eyes.

Having said all these, the question remains how can one receive the righteousness of God?

Moses answered this question in* Genesis 15:6 through the experience of Abram, **"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."**

The Apostle Paul used this text in Genesis 15:6 as the cornerstone on which he erected the entire doctrine of Justification by faith.*

Romans 4:3 "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness"

Galatians 3:6 "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness"

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Abram expressed complete trust in the power and covenant promises of God. He “believed” which has the same meaning as “amen”, in the same way we emphasize our desire that God may hear and fulfill our prayers.* Abram put his faith in God. It was not merely a belief in something impersonal, but a personal trust and confidence in God. This was also not just Abram’s experience for the moment, but an abiding character trait. When God instructed him to go into a far-away place which he shall receive for an inheritance, without knowing where this place is, he believed what God told him and acted accordingly. His faith found expression in faithful obedience. Abram gave more than a mental assent. He appreciated and treasured the promises of God, and in this sense kept the covenant with God, thus becoming the father of all them that believe as confirmed in Romans 4:11.*

The Apostle Paul in Heb 11:8 wrote “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went”

Yet Abram was not looking for the literal land of Canaan. He accepted that he was literally a pilgrim and a sojourner in this world. His ultimate objective was the eternal inheritance which God has provided for those who love and serve Him.*

The Apostle Paul confirmed this point in **Heb 11:10 “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”**

To be sure, Abram’s faith and childlike trust in God did not make him “righteous”. Rather, God “counted it to him for righteousness.” God imputed His righteousness to Abram. When righteousness was imputed to him, mercy and grace were also extended, effecting in the pardon of his sins and bringing the rewards of righteousness. It was one hundred percent God’s work, man’s part is to submit and co-operate. God is everything, and man is nothing.*

Sister White surmised this point succinctly in RH Nov 4 1890. “Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of his Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as he loves his Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness; and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light.”

In contrast, at Mount Sinai God exhorted Israel of old to keep His covenant assuring them of the results. They could keep it simply by keeping the faith. God did not ask them to enter into

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another covenant with Him, but only to accept His covenant of peace. The proper response of the people should have been, "Amen, even so, O Lord, let it be done unto us according to thy will." Instead the people responded by making a promise themselves saying in* **Ex 19:8 "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do"** Their promises were worthless because they did not have the power to fulfill them, yet Israel repeated the promise twice as recorded in Ex. 24:3, 7. It is no wonder that with a longing heart God responded, as recorded in* **Deut 5:29 " O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"**

In Zechariah 4:3,4 the removal of the filthy garments signified the remission of sin and restoration to God's divine favor. The new raiment represented the imputed righteousness of God.* **"3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."**

Earlier on we touched on Abram's belief and how he expressed complete trust in the power and covenant promises of God. Now, let us look more deeply as to why Abram said amen in his heart, and believed in the power and the covenant promise of God*

Genesis 15:5 records this belief and trust in God's promise **"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."**

In a night vision, the patriarch was led out into the open and bidden to lift his eyes to the starry sky and count the stars if he could. The awesome creative power of God was in this way revealed to Abram. He then understood the creative power of God, and that this awesome power exerted in creation is the same power exerted for man's redemption, and that this power can be his if he wanted it to gain victory over sin.

God in previous occasions assured Abram that he is to possess the entire land of Canaan. At intervals God repeated the promise, and Abram accepted it without ever seeing a visible sign of its fulfillment. He was still the homeless wanderer he had been when he arrived from Mesopotamia, and was still childless.

The question arose in his mind, and he said in* **Genesis 15:8 "And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"**

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God recognized the right of his faithful servant Abram to seek for faith's full assurance, and condescended to enter into a solemn covenant with Abram, in a form customary among the people of that time for the ratification of a solemn engagement.

God instructed Abram in* **Genesis 15: 9,10** **"And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. 10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not."**

The parties entering into the covenant were to walk between the divided pieces, symbolically vowing perpetual obedience to the provisions thus solemnly agreed upon. The lives of the animals pledged the lives of those participating in the covenant. Abram reverently walked between the severed parts of the sacrifice, according to custom, making a solemn vow to God of perpetual obedience.*

Sister White confirmed this in PP p137.1/.2 "The Lord condescended to enter into a covenant with His servant, employing such forms as were customary among men for the ratification of a solemn engagement. By divine direction, Abraham sacrificed a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each three years old, dividing the bodies and laying the pieces a little distance apart. To these he added a turtledove and a young pigeon, which, however, were not divided. This being done, he reverently passed between the parts of the sacrifice, making a solemn vow to God of perpetual obedience."

"As a pledge of this covenant of God with men, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, symbols of the divine presence, passed between the severed victims, totally consuming them"

The basis for this ancient practice is recorded in* **Jeremiah 34:18** **"And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof"**

Sister White in Patriarchs and Prophets page 137.1 wrote: **"The plan of redemption was here opened to him, in the death of Christ, the great sacrifice, and His coming in glory. Abraham saw also the earth restored to its Eden beauty, to be given him for an everlasting possession, as the final and complete fulfillment of the promise."**

As recorded in Genesis 15:17 "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." God confirmed His covenant promise to Abram and his decedents by an "oath" as represented by the above recorded event. In short, God had pledged Himself, and His own existence, to our salvation in Jesus Christ, His life for ours, if we are lost while believing in Him.

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The “oath” referred to above was that given by God in confirmation of His covenant with Abram. It is one of the two “immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie” as recorded in Heb. 6:18, the other being the promise which the “oath” confirms. In giving Abram “an oath for confirmation” God employed a human custom in order to assure Abram of the certainty of His promise. Thus the oath would help strengthen our faith, even though there was absolutely no necessity for God to give an oath, His word is power and lasts forever.*

As stated Hebrews 6:18 “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

“19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast...”

Therefore, the everlasting covenant gives us “a strong consolation” and is “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast”

God’s righteousness, His character, is the single most important thing in this world one must seek, as recorded in* **Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

Furthermore, in **1 Corinthians 6:9 the Apostle Paul wrote: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”**

One may now ask, since the character of God is so critically important to have, how then can the character of God be attained by sinful imperfect man?*

Sister White wrote in Ministry of Healing pages 419.3/419.4 “Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. Yet not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of the personality of God as it was revealed in Christ.”

“God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God.”

Again Sister White counsels in Ministry of Healing page 425.2 “The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It is the knowledge that works transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will re-create the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine.” Notice the words: This is the knowledge that works transformation of character. As Jesus was in human nature, so God means His followers to be.”

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The Apostle Paul confirms this line of thought in Colossians 1:9-11 “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”

Paul in Ephesians 5:1 state that we are to be “imitators” of God’s character “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children”. The word “followers” in Greek means “imitator.” If God Himself had not commanded us to do this we might think that the requirement is practically impossible, but since it is God Himself who bids us to be like Him in our character, to say that it is impossible is to charge God with light and foolish talking.*

Sister White in Testimonies for the church volume 5 page 155.2 wrote "Yield yourself up to Me; give Me that will; take it from the control of Satan, and I will take possession of it; then I can work in you to will and to do of My good pleasure." When He gives you the mind of Christ, your will becomes as His will, and your character is transformed to be like Christ's character." Yes, yes, Yield yourself up to Christ, give Him your will, please do this without delay, that your character is transformed, that Christ’s mind, heart, purpose, and character are yours too.*

Review and Herald November 10, 1891 par 4 she wrote* “Men who turn away from the knowledge of God, have placed their minds under the control of their master, Satan, and he trains them to be his servants.”

Sister White concludes as such in page 426.4 “This is the knowledge which God is inviting us to receive, and beside which all else is vanity and nothingness”. Yes, without the essential knowledge of God all else is vanity.*

John 17:3 states “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” The essential knowledge of the personality and presence of God-the-Father and His only begotten son leads to eternal life. In contrast an absence of the knowledge of the personality and presence of God-the-Father and His only begotten son leads to eternal damnation.

Experiential, living knowledge leads to life eternal. Although there is no salvation in knowledge alone, but neither can there be salvation without this essential knowledge.* Rom 10:14 tells us “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”

Essential saving knowledge in John 17:3 is here defined as that which is centered upon the “one true God” of the Bible and upon Jesus Christ, in contrast with false gods. It was the knowledge

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of Jesus Christ that was strikingly absent from the religion of the Jews. Men will be rejected in the last day because they have rejected this essential knowledge.* **Hosea 4:6 declares “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...”**

Many souls would inevitably be “destroyed” because of their lack of this essential knowledge. They might have had the knowledge had they put forth the effort to obtain it. Men are held responsible not only for what they know, but also for what they might have known had they put forth the effort to obtain essential knowledge. God gave to all His divine thoughts as recorded in the 66 books of the Holy Scripture for man’s salvation. To claim ignorance on this essential knowledge on the day of judgement is no excuse.*

Hebrews 1:9 states: “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows”

The Father commends Christ for His love of righteousness, and also for His hatred of sin. It is possible to resist sin without actually hating it. To love righteousness is a higher virtue than merely doing righteousness. Many sincere Christians take an active part in various good enterprises more from a sense of duty than from any inherent love for the work.

It is when God’s righteousness, His mind, His Spirit, His character, abideth in the heart, only then can the man who has actually learned to hate sin is really secure, and glorify the one true God of the Bible, who alone through His only Begotten son can save man.

Take Home message

One who truly seeks will never fail to reach an understanding of the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Although an exhaustive knowledge of God can never be obtained, even though an eternity is spent in learning ever more of His loving nature, knowledge sufficient for salvation is promised to every searcher for truth.