

Third Quarter 2008

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Special Insights No. 9

(Produced by the Editorial Board of the 1888 Message Study Committee)

A Pillar of Mission: The Apostle Peter

"It was through self-sufficiency that Peter fell; and it was through repentance and humiliation that his feet were again established. In the record of his experience every repenting sinner may find encouragement. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken. The words of Christ were written upon his soul, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Luke 22:32. In his bitter agony of remorse, this prayer, and the memory of Christ's look of love and pity, gave him hope. Christ after His resurrection remembered Peter, and gave the angel the message for the women, 'Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.' Mark 16:7. Peter's repentance was accepted by the *sin-pardoning Saviour*" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 155; emphasis mine).

"The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the *sin-pardoning Redeemer*" (*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1073; 1892; emphasis mine).

God's love (*agape*) as well as His righteousness is revealed in Jesus, the "sin-pardoning Redeemer/Saviour." The exchange of words between Jesus and Peter recorded in John 21 demonstrates the difference between human love and God's love (*agape*). In this incident, Peter demonstrated that he recognized that *agape* comes only from God. Man can not generate *agape*. Peter finally recognized that human love could fail and was not dependable.

God's love (*agape*) is the heart of the pure New Testament gospel and it is the core of that "most precious message" that came to "us" in 1888. It is heartening to know that Jesus is "working" as hard to save us as He did (prayed) for Peter.

Monday's lesson: Peter's confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 6:16), was divinely inspired. It too is a demonstration of a God of love revealing Himself to fallen humanity. This confession is the foundation of God's Christian Church. It is the "key" that opens the "gates of heaven" to us and allows the Holy Spirit to fill us with *agape*. As we allow God's love to flow through us to others, God's church grows and is strengthened.

Tuesday's lesson: As Peter humbled himself and allowed *agape* to flow to others, he became a very effective missionary and pillar of the church. It is only through the mighty working of the Holy Spirit that Peter's shadow could effectively heal anyone.

This same Holy Spirit worked through others for the "building up" of the "Church." The events in this section demonstrate the Spiritual Gifts of administration, management, and leadership along with the importance of these gifts in Church growth. We should note that the "members and leaders" expounded the Gospel while the Holy Spirit brought the "growth" and supplied the gifts to manage it.

Wednesday's lesson: Later, Paul would write: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:28, 29).

Peter must have matured considerably in his Christian experience to be trusted with the vision that revealed Jesus as the "Saviour of the world," not just the Jewish

nation. Peter must have understood the “wideness” of agape to accept this wider vision of his mission and the mission of the church. Peter must have experienced a genuine death to self to accept this very important tenet of the Gospel.

This principle (Jesus as Savior of the world) is an integral part of the 1888 message given in Minneapolis. Unfortunately, many cannot “see” or accept it. Could the reason be that we do not have a clear picture of God’s unconditional agape? Perhaps we have not experienced a genuine death to self and find ourselves unable to give up pre-conceived opinions.

Peter’s leadership skills were an important factor in bringing the church to accept the concept that non-Jews could become Christians and enjoy the benefits of God’s grace. Perhaps some of us will have to accept leadership positions to bring this to the modern day church.

Thursday’s lesson: The incident recorded in Galatians 2:11-14 is an illustration of the failure of human love. In this case it was a failure of Peter’s human love. He lost sight of the “wideness” of God’s love. He was not filled with agape on that day and he mistreated his brothers in Christ who were not Jews. At the same time he was a poor witness to his fellow Jews as he revealed a very poor picture of God’s loving face.

“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them” (*op. cit.*, p. 415).

“If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord’s glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence.

“The revelation of His own glory in the form of humanity will bring heaven so near to men that the beauty adorning the inner temple will be seen in every soul in whom the Saviour dwells. Men will be captivated by the glory of an abiding Christ. And in currents of praise and thanksgiving from the many souls thus won to God, glory will flow back to the great Giver” (*ibid.*, p. 420).

—J. B. Jablonski

Read Insights #10