

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

The Fruit of the Spirit **Lesson 2: “The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love”**

Ellen G. White was given a vision that demonstrates the importance of understanding how God defines the concept of love:

“Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest [the Most Holy Apartment], and pray, ‘My Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

“I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne [who had not followed Christ by faith into the Most Holy Apartment]; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, ‘Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace.” [1]

Note the differences, Satan could not counterfeit “love, joy, and peace.” No one really knew what love was until the cross. The life and death of Jesus invested an obscure Greek word, *agape*, and its human response, faith, with enhanced meaning that turned the ancient “world upside down.”

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

“The gold tried in the fire is faith that works by love. Only this can bring us into harmony with God. We may be active, we may do much work; but without love, such love as dwelt in the heart of Christ, we can never be numbered with the family of heaven.” [2]

Christ Himself makes clear what New Testament faith is, and his view is different from that of the popular concept. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him ...” Note: God’s love comes first, and until that love is revealed, there can be no believing. As the result of His “loving” and “giving,” the sinner finds it possible to “believe.” Thus, faith is a heart-experience, “heart-work” to borrow Ellen White’s phrase, and it cannot exist until God’s love is understood and appreciated. Please note very carefully a fundamental point: the “believing” is not motivated by a fear of perishing or an acquisitive reward of everlasting life. The believing is the direct result of the loving.

The work of the High Priest in the Most Holy Apartment will result in the complete purification of the motives of those who follow His work by faith. They will become mature Christians and “put away childish things,” i.e., self-centered motivations (1 Cor. 13:11).

Whereas all non-Christian religions as well as apostate Christianity appeal to man’s self-centeredness and insecurity, the apostles presented a gospel with a radically different appeal. Paul, for example, did not begin his preaching with a presentation of man’s need, but of God’s deed. “When I came to you, ... I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1, 2). The result was the development of true faith in the hearts of the listeners. Such a heart response is the true article of “faith” found in New Testament justification by faith. This is the third angel’s message *in verity!*

The true Christocentric motivation for service and obedience finds refreshing demonstration in the appeals of the 1888 messengers. A. T. Jones said:

“I heard of a person ... speaking of the missionary work, “Oh, I must do more work, or I will not have stars in my crown. I must do more or someone else will have more stars than I.” ... This is not the right motive; nothing is the right motive but love for Christ.

“Think of it, my brethren, if I should be so happy and so glad as to get to that blessed place, and the Saviour should hand me a crown, do you think, brethren, that I could stand in His presence and put it on? ... Do you think that I could stand before my master and beholding the print of the nails in His hand, and see the marks of the thorns that pierced His lovely brow,—do you think, I say, that I could ... receive from those hands a crown, to be placed on my head? No! No! I would want to bow low at His knee and put it on *His* head, for His is the power and the glory.” [3]

This kind of love is a gift from God, one facet of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We can conform our conduct to appear as if we have such love, but our love will always arise from self-centered motives. Any distortion of this truth is just that, a distortion, and constitutes a refusal to follow Jesus into His Most Holy Apartment ministry of cleansing His sanctuary.

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56.

[2] *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

[3] Sermon, Sept. 24, 1888, Oakland, California; cited in Wieland, R. J., *Knocking at the Door*, p. 66.