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Righteousness by Faith and the Third Angel's Message — 1

As we have seen, by 1888 the disjunction between Adventism and the evangelical understanding of salvation had become problematic.



▲ George R. Knight

Adventists were strong on the distinctive Adventist beliefs but weak on the great gospel teachings that their founders had shared with other Christians. Ellen White saw Jones and Waggoner as a corrective to that difficulty.

Contrary to some works-oriented leaders of the day, Waggoner realized that his church had departed from the historic doctrine of salvation. Ellen White spoke to the same truth in expressing her surprise that some found Jones' and Waggoner's teaching to be a "strange doctrine," when their "message" was "not a new truth, but the very same that Paul taught, that Christ himself taught" (MS 27, 1889).

Waggoner's comment that his interpretation of law and gospel reflected that of Paul, Luther and Wesley became even more profound and insightful when he added that it "was a step closer to the heart of the third angel's message." Ellen White came to the same viewpoint. Observing that some had "expressed fears that

we shall dwell too much upon the subject of justification by faith," she indicated that several had written to her, "inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message." She replied that "it is the third angel's message in verity [i.e., truth]" (*Review and Herald*, Apr. 1, 1890).

That statement has mystified some. What exactly did she mean? We will examine that topic in the next few [issues].

Meanwhile, we should recall that Revelation 14:12 is the central text in Adventist history. *Here is the patient of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

Recognizing the implications of the Adventists' use of that text as a description of their denomination, a reporter for the *Minneapolis Journal* pointed out that "it is either monstrous egotism or sublime faith which leads them to apply this text to themselves."

The Adventists, of course, considered it "sublime faith." And both sides in the 1888 crisis came to realize ever more clearly as time passed that their differences at Minneapolis centered on the meaning of Revelation 14:12.

By the way, that is a good text to memorize as we meditate upon its meaning and implications. ■

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Not a New Way to Pray

As I wrote this article, we were approaching the Thanksgiving season, anticipating the arrival of our family. Thanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday, primarily because of its spiritual dimension that calls us to reconnect with our Creator in gratitude.

Thanksgiving took on a deeper dimension for me in 1965 when we were introduced to the Dale Wright Memorial Church, a little church on the hill filled with praise, love and gratitude, and invited to come for the three-day Thanksgiving services with C.D. Brooks.

This annual event helped shape my spiritual renewal in preparation for the new year. This year, I was impressed to focus on "not a new way to pray" by glean-ing expressions, thoughts and subjects found in the prayers of the Psalms. Maybe you would like to join me.

When you feel troubled or discouraged, pray Psalm 3. *You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the one who lifts my head.*

Psalm 4 can help when you are in distress and need a rescue. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress: Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.*

Make the commitment of Psalm 5. *My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.*

Start your day with a Psalm 9 positive attitude: *I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.*

When you fail and are bruised and broken, make the appeal of Psalm 6. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled; But You, O Lord — how long? Return, O Lord, deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!*

Be honest when you pray. Pray for justice with the compassion and urgency of Psalm 10. *Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.*

Be as real and vulnerable as Psalm 13. *How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*

Stop to consider the reality check found in Psalm 18: *The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God who avenges me . . .*

Seek your Savior's counsel: *Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.*

It's not a new way to pray, but praying the prayers in Scripture may just produce a new experience. ■

Gary Burns is Prayer Ministries coordinator for the Lake Union Conference.

All Scripture quoted from New King James Version



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