

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Salvation and the End Time – 21-27 April 2018

Christ would have us experience the love of God for our salvation: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). But many Seventh-day Adventists, with a trinity mindset, cannot experience the love of God. The *Trinity* says there is One God who is simultaneously Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It creates confusion as to who is the One God that gave His Son and who was the Son that He gave. Yet, our very salvation hinges on accepting the gift of the Son that God gave to save us.

Sunday: The Love of the Father – “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The word ‘love’ in Greek can be rendered as *Eros* (romantic love) or *Storge* (familial love) or *Philia* (friendship love) or *Agape* (selfless love). Misapplying 1 John 4:7-12, those who ally with Satan to obscure that Christ is the literal begotten Son of God, use *Eros* mindset to teach that God did not at any point in eternity exist alone before Christ came forth because in order for God to be God and to be love He had to have at least one co-equal, co-eternal person with whom He bestows love and from whom He receives love. *Eros* mindset describes God in the context of a love that needs someone else in order to be love, and avers that perfect love is possible only between equals. *Eros* mindset reduces God to a selfish God, distorting 1 John 4:8 by mixing *Eros* and *Agape*! See 1 John 4:7-12.

In verse 8, John defines God as love, demonstrated by sending His Son. Consistency of usage in this text point to the fact that the God mentioned in verse 8 is the same God in verses 9-12. This suggests that the God in verse 8 is the Father and that His love is revealed in the giving of His Son to save humanity. *Agape* love is a love that invests value rather than seeks it. God giving His Son to us invests value in us and is indeed *agape*. *Eros* mindset misapplies 1 John 4:8-12 to giving and receiving of love between co-equals and co-eternals, which is not what the text teaches.

Eros is the need to serve in reciprocity, but *agape* serves without reciprocity. *Eros* is the need for co-equality, but *agape* is willingness to serve the least worthy. *Eros* seeks equal, but *agape* makes equal. *Eros* mindset asks: if Jesus were begotten in eternity then there would be a time He did not exist and therefore how could He be God? This question only occurs in the domain of *Eros* love that seeks value rather than invests value. *Eros* demands equality of status in all areas yet *agape* does not. *Agape* accepts that in Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Col 2:9), “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell” (Col 1:19), *Eros* thinks to be ‘heir of all things’ (Heb 1:2) and thus equal with God ‘by inheritance’ (Heb 1:4) is robbery on Christ’s part, but *agape* thinks ‘it not robbery to be equal with God’ by ‘being in the form of God’ (Philippians 2:6).

The mixture of *Eros* and *Agape* that teaches that God cannot be love unless Christ is of co-eternal age with God, is contrary to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that clearly teach that Jesus proceeded out of the Father at a distant past time in our human computation we call eternity. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). “The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Proverbs 8:22-23). ‘And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting”’ (EG White, PP 34.1).

Christ inherited all that the Father has and is fully divine by inheritance and in that inheritance we are able to hear the loving words of the Father who spoke to His Son (Mat 3:17). The words Father and Son only find meaning through inheritance that *agape* accepts and *Eros* denies. Through the *agape* of 1 John 4:8 we can take hold of the words: “... but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). The Father of Jesus is our Father and the God of Jesus is our God, and all this we possess through Christ who is the greatest demonstration of *agape* the universe can ever behold. ‘God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son’ (8T 268.3).

The *Eros* mindset that teaches that for God to be love Christ must have been of co-eternal existence with God for both to bestow and receive love from each other, is a satanic mindset, for Satan thought perfect love was only possible between equals, and he demanded equality with his Creator, Christ, in order for him to accept that God is love. ‘The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will

and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him' (1SP 17.2; SR 13.2). 'When God said to His Son, "Let us make man in our image" [Gen 1:26], Satan was jealous of Jesus' (EW 145.1). In this controversy, Satan seeks to distort the *agape* love of God, but when this controversy is ended, all will 'declare that God is love' (GC 678.3).

Monday: The Love of Christ – "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (read Philippians 2: 5-8). This passage delineates the selfless *Agape* love of Christ, and contrasts it with *Eros* that depicts the mind of lawlessness that Lucifer appropriated when he fell into sin. It is this mind of selfishness that Adam first fell into. But a way of escape was made for Adam and all of his children who are saved by faith. By faith Adam could look through the long corridor of history, and behold the cross of Christ, for Galatians 5:6 informs us that true faith works by love. And what is that love? It is the unconditional love that Christ has for us, which was demonstrated to us on the cross; and we are exhorted to simply: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Tuesday: Love of the Spirit – The Lesson writer quotes: "The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption" (Ellen G White, Counsels on Health, p 222). In the Bible, the word "Godhead" is found in three texts: Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 2:9 – and refers to the Father only. It was the Father who was stirred enough to send His beloved Son. Trinitarians may think the quote means that the three 'worked the plan out' together, but it is not in harmony with many other Spirit of Prophecy statements: "The plan of salvation devised by the Father and the Son will be a grand success" (ST, Jun 17, 1903); "Before the fall of man, the Son of God had united with His Father in laying the plan of salvation" (RH, Sep 13, 1906); "A covenant has been entered into by the Father and by the Son to save the world through Christ" (ST, Oct 10, 1892); and "In counsel together, the Father and the Son determined that Satan should not be left unchecked to exercise his cruel power upon man" (Manuscript 31, 1911). The Lesson writer says, "In short, the Holy Spirit is God, as are the Father and the Son. Together, they are One God." But the Bible says, there is only "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4) that is holy; that one Spirit is "the Spirit of your Father" (Matthew 10:20); that one Spirit is which God gave to His Son, Christ, "for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34); that one Spirit is shared by the Father and His Son as their Spirit, that is why Paul interchanges this by saying, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9); that one Spirit the Father gives us as the Spirit of His Son, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6); it is that one Spirit that Christ breathed out to His disciples, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22); that one Spirit of Christ in us is Christ for "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17); and as the Father and Son share that one Spirit, when that one Spirit is in us, Father and Son are in us, for Christ said: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Wednesday: Assurance of Salvation – "Why weepest thou?" (John 20:13). It is not sin to weep, but one should know truly why he weeps. Tears may flow because of sin, and much more at the thought of God's goodness and tender mercy; but these very tears, if our eyes are open, contain the assurance of salvation, for the sunlight of God's love falls on them and makes the bow of promise. There is no situation so desperate but that the very trouble itself affords hope, if we but recognise the Lord in it. Do you weep because you have allowed your eyes to remain closed to the "exceeding great and precious promises"? – Let the tears swing open the gates, that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," you may "know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."

Thursday: The Everlasting Gospel – A careful reading of Revelation 13:4-15 and 14:9-10 shows that it is describing a time when worship is being directed to some other than the true God, and just then "the everlasting Gospel" is preached "with a loud voice," just as in the time of Elijah and of John the Baptist, urging the worship of the true God. That the issue at stake now is the same as of old, is shown from the fact that those who receive this special message of "the everlasting Gospel" are described in verse 12 as following: "Here are they that *keep the commandments of God.*" In Elijah's time they forsook the commandments of God and followed Baal; in the time of John the Baptist they "reject the commandment of God" and follow the "tradition of the elders;" in our time there is "the form of godliness" without the power, and the same putting of the authority of man in the place of the plain Word of God. In all three cases God sends forth His Everlasting Gospel message of warning, with a revealing of His power, in order that men may be "without excuse."