

“GO FORWARD”

General Conference Sabbath Sermon - July 3, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning, brothers and sisters in Christ! What a privilege to worship together on this last Sabbath morning of the 59th General Conference session...young people, older people, women, men, and children all together as God’s family. We are grateful for the many ways the Lord has led His church during this week. We give all the glory to Him.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is on a heaven-directed journey and we are almost home. I believe with all my heart that Jesus is coming soon! We say it in every language..... “Jesus revient bientot! (French) “Haysoos vee-en-nay (vien-a) pronto!” (Spanish), Brehvee Jayzeus voltarah! (Portuguese), Isus prediot skora! (Russian), Yesu ana-kuja kari-buni sana! (Swahili), Yesu knee me.....Kgauld....O shim-knee-dah! (Korean), Yesu zhai-lie! (Chinese), Yesu jelldee eye-gah! (Hindi), Si Haysus eye ma-lahh-pit nang duma-ting! (Tagalog), Ha ana ahti seriahn! (Arabic), Yahsus kommt bahldt! (German).....and in so many other languages of the world.

I appreciate the wonderful spirit and enthusiasm of our worldwide family of faith. And while we are all proud of our respective nations and cultures, I praise the Lord that there is a culture of Christ that binds us together and supersedes all others. In that spirit, I humbly ask for your prayers that the message I share today is heard clearly and that the messenger not be lifted up. To that end, if there is a particular point with which you agree, please respond with a heartfelt “Amen” instead of applause. Thank you for your help in keeping the message, not the messenger, the center of our time together.

CHAOTIC WORLD; SOLID WORD

Signs of Christ’s coming are increasing in frequency and intensity every day. Destructive events in nature, the great confusion of world politics, the pervasive and compromising activities of ecumenism, the dramatic increase and influence of spiritualism, the deterioration of world economies, the disintegration of societal and family values, the disbelief in the absolute authority of God’s Holy Word and the ten commandments, rampant crime and moral decay, wars and rumors of war, on and on. All point unmistakably to the climax of earth’s history and the Lord’s return to take us on the final journey home to heaven.

What a tremendous blessing to know that even amidst the uncertainty of the world around us we can rest with absolute confidence in the unchanging Word of God! Throughout the course of human history and against relentless satanic attack, God has preserved His Holy Word. The Bible contains an accurate account of our origins, a reliable record of our salvation, and a glorious glimpse at our soon coming deliverance. As Seventh-day Adventists, we accept the Bible as the foundation for all our beliefs and see in its pages our unique prophetic identity and mission.

ADVENTIST IDENTITY AND MISSION

With the power of His truth, God has carved out of this chaotic world the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are to be a peculiar people, God's *remnant* people....to lift up Christ, His righteousness, His three angels' messages of Revelation 14, and His soon coming. As Bible believing Christians living in the last days of earth's history, we are to be what the apostle Peter called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). As God's remnant people identified in Revelation 12:17 as those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," we have a unique message of hope and a mandate to proclaim God's grace to the world. In the seventh volume of the Testimonies we read, "Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world... He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation" (*Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 7, p 138).

SABBATH

One of the identifying characteristics of God's last-day people is the fact that the members of His church accept and believe ALL ten of God's commandments including the fourth commandment which calls us to remember the Lord's holy Sabbath day. The observance of the Sabbath is not only a sign of His creatorship in the beginning but will be THE sign of God's people in the last days in contrast to those with the mark of the beast representing an attempt to keep holy a day which God has not set apart as holy.

SABBATH AND THE THREE ANGEL'S MESSAGES

The Sabbath and its significance relates to each of the three angels' messages in Revelation 14. The first angel, "having the everlasting Gospel"-----the righteousness of Christ----proclaims "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:6, 7). God is the Creator and is to be worshiped on His Sabbath day as a sign of our loyalty to His Word and creative power. The second angel in verse 8 proclaims, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen.because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." She has corrupted God's commandments and instituted another day of worship other than the seventh-day Sabbath, which is the only true mark of God's creatorship. The third angel announces in verses 9-12 that "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand" he or she will be tormented or destroyed with fire and brimstone. If you worship the beast and his image you are rejecting THE one sign God has proclaimed as His test of allegiance.....the seventh-day Sabbath.

SALVATION

The third angel closes his proclamation in verse 12 by identifying God's people as those "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." We rely wholly on Jesus and our relationship with Him for our salvation. We do not obtain salvation through works, but through the grace of Christ that we proclaim. Grace is the promise of God's pardon and the provision of God's power— justification and sanctification. You cannot separate what Christ does FOR you (justifying you daily as if you had not

sinned) from what He does IN you (sanctifying you daily as you submit to Him and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to change your life to become more and more like Jesus.) This is the everlasting Gospel spoken about in the first angel's message. It is righteousness by faith. This is why Seventh-day Adventists should be the most powerful voices in proclaiming God's grace! The Great Controversy theme is all about God's grace to save sinners and through His power to transform them into His sons and daughters, faithful witnesses proclaiming the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit zeal through a living connection with Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The atoning blood of Jesus Christ on the cross and the atoning ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary have but one purpose; the salvation of every repentant sinner. Thus, through His atoning sacrifice and High Priestly ministry we can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). It is this marvelous, powerful, redeeming grace we have been called to proclaim to a sin-sick world.

Furthermore, only a genuine realization of the depths of God's grace can remove all ground for the opposite extremes of either self-indulgence or self-reliance. That marvelous book, *Steps to Christ*, explains that, "We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us [justification], and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us [sanctification]" (*Steps to Christ*, p 63). Read those wonderful pages surrounding this quotation for a clear view of righteousness by faith.

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Now, getting back to Revelation 12:17 and another great distinguishing mark of God's remnant people. We read that they will "have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 19:10 tells us that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The same spirit that moved the holy men of old has again, in these last days, raised up a messenger for the Lord. My brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Lord has given us one of the greatest gifts possible in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Just as the Bible is not outdated or irrelevant, neither is the testimony of God's end-time messenger. God used Ellen G White as a humble servant to provide inspired insight about Scripture, prophecy, health, education, relationships, mission, families, and so many more topics. Let us read the Spirit of Prophecy, follow the Spirit of Prophecy and share the Spirit of Prophecy. There are so many wonderful books to share including the one book Ellen White indicated she wished distributed more than any other, *The Great Controversy*. Thank the Lord for the religious freedom in this and other countries that allows us to share truth. The Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of God's last-day remnant people and is just as applicable today as ever before because it was given to us by heaven itself. As God's faithful remnant, may we never make of none effect the precious light given us in the writings of Ellen G. White.

CHRIST-LIKE HUMILITY

When we use that term, remnant church or remnant people, we must never use it in a self-centered, exclusive manner. We are to be the humblest people on earth, recognizing our complete need of Jesus our Savior and praising Him for calling us into this mighty Advent movement. This Advent movement is made up of humble, simple people –not simplistic, but simple. Many of God's people are educated,

disciplined, and savvy, but yet we are to be a simple people. Our Savior spoke with astonishing authority yet was humble enough to be appealing to the worst of sinners. This church is not just another denomination; it is a unique, heaven-initiated movement with an evangelistic mission of salvation to the world that must continually go forward in the humility of Jesus. The world needs to hear the message of Christ from a people who are Christ-like. When we are transformed by His grace, we will preach, teach, and witness to the straight message from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy in a humble, loving, winsome manner.

When we, in all humility, lean completely on the everlasting arms of our Lord, He will work through us in a mighty way to give the final message of mercy to a dying world. Our success in finishing this work depends on our submissiveness to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. It depends on humbling ourselves before our Creator and denying self so that Jesus can control us and overcome our sin. It depends on whether or not we are ready to humbly ask for revival and reformation in our lives personally and corporately as a church, which will lead to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.

Mrs. White records a vision in Testimonies, Vol 8, entitled, “What Might Have Been” (*Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 8, p 104-106). She saw that God wanted to do two great things at the General Conference Session in 1901: 1. Reorganize the church which happened giving us much of the structure we have today; and 2. Provide the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which did not happen because there was unbelief within the church and God’s leaders and people did not humble themselves before God. The church missed the opportunity of receiving the latter rain. It was one hundred nine years ago. Let us not make God wait any longer to begin the latter rain so that Jesus can come.

We need to earnestly pray for that experience. We have been doing that during this session and must continue to earnestly seek the Lord’s will in our lives after we leave here. Mrs. White makes clear that “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work” (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p 121). During a number of the business sessions of this General Conference, you have been pleading for revival and reformation, for the Holy Spirit and the latter rain. Brothers and sisters, it is time.....the Lord is coming soon! He wants to use His remnant church in a most powerful way.

The Lord is longing to reproduce in us His own character. This can happen as we surrender ourselves to Him each day. As Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” As we connect with Christ daily and allow Him to work through us, we will be used by the Holy Spirit to proclaim His grace and to hasten the coming of the Lord. Remember, this is the Advent movement, a called people, a remnant church, a people of destiny, a people on a journey toward heaven as we proclaim God’s grace.

In the book *Christ’s Object Lessons* we read of Christ’s wish for His people, “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess

His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p 69).

ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT

In the Old Testament, God called a peculiar people with a message and a destiny. They were called to go on a journey of faith and by their trust in Him to proclaim God’s grace to the world. The Children of Israel lived in Egypt for 400 years and ended up being slaves to the Egyptians. I grew up in Egypt until I was about eight. Cairo was my home.....I knew very little else about the world except the Middle East. It is a wonderful place filled with wonderful people. However, in that ancient time, Israel was in bondage in Egypt. Through God’s miraculous use of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, God freed His people for a journey.....for a mission to the world. After the final and devastating tenth plague, the Children of Israel left on their journey heading south from Egypt.

Exodus 13:21 says that “...the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire....” What a wonderful God.....He will lead us day and night! The Lord led them down the west side of the Red Sea next to the Egyptian Desert. We read in chapter 14:2 that God led them to a place to “camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.” My father, who spent almost 15 years in Egypt, feels he knows where this place is as it is described in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. It is a place where God could demonstrate His power against the Egyptians. Some Biblical scholars think the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea in a place where there was a waist-deep sea of reeds. Of what value would that be for God to demonstrate His power? Absolutely no value at all! In reality, it was a very difficult place. As the Israelites were progressing south they had the Egyptian Desert to the west, a mountain in front of them, the Red Sea to the east and Egypt behind them. The chapter goes on to describe how Pharaoh changed his mind and marshaled his forces to pursue the Israelites with “six hundred choice chariots and all the chariots of Egypt.” Verse 10 says that when the Israelites heard Pharaoh’s army coming, they became terrified. Why is it that when God is leading, we become afraid? The Israelites had the demonstration of the cloud and pillar of fire—why not trust in a power that was leading them? Let’s learn the lesson. The Israelites were so distraught they chided Moses in verse 11 saying, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Why do we act the same way at times? We see God’s miraculous signs of guidance and mercy and then something goes wrong and we blame God.

Then in verse 13 Moses tells the people not to be afraid and to “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which HE will accomplish for you today.” Often we are tempted to act on our own impulses without allowing the Lord to guide our steps. However, the Lord asks us to go forward only under His direction. Thus Moses gave the powerful promise in verse 14 that should be the promise we all claim as we face the culmination of the great controversy between Christ and Satan; “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Brothers and sisters, the Lord will fight for us, He will open the way. He will provide victory for His church but we must trust Him, we must humble ourselves before Him, we must obey Him, and we must follow His leading.

And then, God proclaimed to the Children of Israel through Moses the same command He gives His last-day remnant church today. Verse 15 declares, “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to GO FORWARD.’” When God says, Go Forward, we must Go Forward.

However, the children of Israel couldn’t see the big picture. They had forgotten how God had led them in the past. Let us never forget how God has led this Advent movement in the past and how He will lead it to victory in the future to the glory of His name and the vindication of His plan of salvation before the whole universe. We are at the end of the Great Controversy and God says “Go Forward.”

But what were the Children of Israel to do? They felt trapped by the desert to their right, the mountain ahead of them, the Red Sea to their left and the approaching army of Egypt behind them. They failed to put their trust in power of God. All they could see were the barriers.

I don’t know what barriers you are facing today. I don’t know what barriers you think the church is facing today. Whatever they are, God has a way through-----for each of us personally and for the church as we proclaim God’s grace.

What barriers are you facing this Sabbath?

1. Are you facing:

--Mountains of secular doubt in the Bible?

--A sea of liberal interpretation of the Word of God?

--Armies of spiritual confusion?

God says we are a holy nation and a peculiar people---“Go Forward”

2. Are you confronted with:

--Mountains of financial difficulty?

--A sea of family and personal conflicts?

--Forces of negative social change?

The Lord says, “Go Forward,” you are my chosen people.

3. Are you surrounded by:

--Mountains of miscommunication?

--A sea of unrest and confusion at home/at work/at church/in society?

--Forces of emotional conflict and mistrust?

God says, “Go Forward” regardless of your circumstances. God has a way forward.

Inspiration tells us “God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that HE might manifest HIS power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p 290).

It was then that God worked one of His mighty miracles just as He will today! Verses 19 and 20 of Exodus 14 say that the protective cloud of God moved from before the Israelites to behind them to protect them from the Egyptian army. To the Israelites the cloud was an illuminated flood of light and to the Egyptians it was a wall of darkness.

Verse 21 says that Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and God created the great Red Sea highway. The cloud held back the Egyptians while the Israelites went forward in faith across the Red Sea. Can you imagine the excitement of more than a million people walking down into the sea on a dry road? Imagine the thrill as children saw fish swimming as if in an aquarium?

Again in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the pen of inspiration describes the setting in powerful language, “The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, ‘Go forward.’ We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p 290).

So, brothers and sisters, look to the Almighty God who can take you through anything you will face in the future. Never lose your full confidence and trust in Him. Always obey His command to “Go Forward.”

After the Israelites had completed their heaven-directed task of walking through the Red Sea, the Egyptians then were allowed to pursue them. It was all according to God’s plan. God has a plan for your life and for this church. Never doubt the destiny of this mighty Advent movement. It is in God’s hands. God has given us prophetic instruction to know the culmination of the great controversy— God is the Victor!

Verses 23-30 describe the incredible sight of the Egyptian army pursuing the Israelites only to have the Lord miraculously remove their chariot wheels and then cause the mighty Red Sea to swallow up the entire army for complete victory. You see what happens when we “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” Verse 31 records, “...Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

Exodus Chapter 15 records the great victory song sung by Moses and the Children of Israel, “...He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will exalt Him.”

Brothers and sisters of the Advent movement.....we are on a tremendous journey. Look only to God for your deliverance. The messenger of the Lord declares, “The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p 290).

Of course, you can rest assured that whatever direction God calls you, Satan tempts you to go the other way. Whenever God says, “Go forward,” the devil has a step backwards for you to take. But my friends, as we stand on the edge of our eternal home, the same God that commanded the Israelites to go forward into the promised land and not backwards into Egypt is today calling you to go forward and not backwards (Exodus 14:15).

GO FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD

Go forward, not backward.....Do not succumb to the mistaken idea, gaining support even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of accepting worship or evangelistic outreach methods merely because they are new and trendy. We must be vigilant to test all things according to the supreme authority of God’s Word and the counsel with which we have been blessed in the writings of Ellen G. White. Don’t reach out to movements or megachurch centers outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church which promise you spiritual success based on faulty theology. Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted. Look WITHIN the Seventh-day Adventist Church to humble pastors, evangelists, Biblical scholars, leaders, and departmental directors who can provide evangelistic methods and programs that are based on solid Biblical principles and the Great Controversy theme.

Go forward, not backward! Use Christ-centered, Bible-based worship and music practices in church services. While we understand that worship services and cultures vary throughout the world, don’t go backwards into confusing pagan settings where music and worship become so focused on emotion and experience that you lose the central focus on the Word of God. All worship, however simple or complex should do one thing and one thing only: lift up Christ and put down self. Worship methods that lift up performance and self should be replaced with a simple and sweet reflection of a Christ-centered, Biblical approach. To define it too closely is impossible but when you read in Scripture of the holiness of God’s presence the Holy Spirit will help you to know what is right and what is wrong.

Go forward, not backward! Stand for truth though the heavens fall. Don’t succumb to fanatical or loose theology that wrests God’s Word from the pillars of Biblical truth and the landmark beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Don’t be swayed with every little whim of “new” theology or complicated time chart purporting to carefully explain unusual or obscure concepts that have little to do with our overall theology and mission. The historic Biblical beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will not be moved. The Biblical foundation will stand secure to the end of time. Listen to what we are told in *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pages 207-208, “What influence is it that would lead men at this stage of our history to work in an underhand, powerful way to tear down the foundation of our faith---the foundation that was laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the Word and by revelation?.....We are God’s commandment-keeping people.....every phase of heresy has been brought

to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word---especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of Heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”

Go forward, not backward! Stand firm for God’s Word as it is literally read and understood. Of course, we must always humbly recognize that we are finite, fallen creatures observing the works of an infinite omnipotent God. There are things in both of God’s two great books of nature and Scripture that we do not fully comprehend. In fact, we are told that the sacrifice of Jesus will be “the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity” (*The Great Controversy*, 651). But that which the Lord in His mercy has given to us in clear language to be taken as fact simply because He said so must not be shrouded in skepticism. Don’t go backwards to misinterpret the first eleven chapters of Genesis or other areas of Scripture as allegorical or merely symbolic. As just this week we have once again affirmed in an overwhelming manner, the Seventh-day Adventist Church both teaches and believes in the biblical record of creation which took place recently; in six literal, consecutive, contiguous 24 hour days. The Seventh-day Adventist Church will never change its stand or belief in that foundational doctrine. If God did not create this world in six literal days and then blessed the Sabbath day, why are we worshipping Him today on this seventh-day Sabbath as SEVENTH-DAY Adventists? To misunderstand or to misinterpret this doctrine is to deny God’s Word and to deny the very purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the remnant church of God called to proclaim the three angels’ messages with Holy Spirit power. Don’t go backwards to atheistic or theistic evolution, go forward to the prophetic understanding that loyalty to God, the Creator and Redeemer, will be seen in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the distinguishing characteristic of God’s people in the very end of time. Seventh-day Adventist Church members, hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, institutions, and administrative organizations accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture. Utilize wonderful resources such as the Biblical Research Institute’s new book on hermeneutics that helps us know the correct way to interpret the Scriptures.

Again we read in *Selected Messages*, Book 1, on p. 170, “We must be careful lest we misinterpret the Scriptures. The plain teachings of the Word of God are not to be so spiritualized that the reality is lost sight of. Do not overstrain the meaning of sentences in the Bible in an effort to bring forth something odd in order to please the fancy. Take the Scriptures as they read.”

I praise the Lord that Nancy and I were both raised by godly parents. In neither of our homes did we ever hear one disparaging or negative word about the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. We were both brought up to fear the Lord and reverence His Word.

A few weeks ago I lost my precious marked Bible while traveling. It was like losing a friend. While I treasured that Bible and I’m so sad not to have it with me today, I praise the Lord I have not lost the Word

of God. You have not lost the Word of God! You have it in your hands either in printed form or on your iPhone, iPad, or other electronic device. We must never take for granted the freedom we have to read and study God's Word. Ellen White spoke poignantly about the Bible in 1909 at her last public appearance at a General Conference Session. After speaking, she left the platform and then came back and took hold of a large Bible and with trembling hands held it out to the congregation and said, "Brothers and Sisters, I commend unto you this book." Today my dear brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we must stand firm on the foundation of Scripture. As God's "people of the Book," let us read the Bible, live the Bible, teach the Bible and preach the Bible with all power from on high.

Go forward, not backward! Let Scripture be its own interpreter. Our church has long held to the Historical-Biblical or Historical-Grammatical method of understanding scripture, allowing the Bible to interpret itself; line upon line, precept upon precept. However, one of the most sinister attacks against the Bible is from those who believe in the Historical-Critical method of explaining the Bible. This unbiblical approach of "higher criticism" is a deadly enemy of our theology and mission. This approach puts a scholar or individual above the plain approach of the scriptures and gives inappropriate license to decide what he or she perceives as truth based on the resources and education of the critic. Stay away from this type of approach because it leads people to distrust God and His Word. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp 17-18 speaks directly to this issue. "When men, in their finite judgment, find it necessary to go into an examination of scriptures to define that which is inspired and that which is not, they have stepped before Jesus to show Him a better way than He has led us. . . . let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible. . . . cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost."

Go forward, not backward! Accept the Spirit of Prophecy as one of the greatest gifts given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church not just for the past, but even more importantly for the future. While the Bible is paramount in our estimation as the ultimate authority and final arbiter of truth, the Spirit of Prophecy provides clear, inspired counsel to aid our application of Bible truth. It is a heaven-sent guide to instruct the church in how to carry out its mission. It is a reliable theological expositor of the Scriptures. The Spirit of Prophecy is to be read, believed, applied and promoted. It is not to be used as a "club" to beat people over the head, but it is to be regarded and employed as a marvelous blessing to direct God's church in the last days of this earth's history. Let me repeat a conviction of mine, there is nothing antiquated or archaic about the Spirit of Prophecy; it is for today and until Christ returns.

GO FORWARD

Members of God's remnant church, God is telling us as we come to the end of time, "Go Forward." Go Forward in lifting up Christ and His righteousness and proclaiming God's grace; Go forward in presenting the three angels' messages; Go forward in pleading for revival and reformation; Go forward in following the Bible as it reads; Go forward in reading and adhering to the counsel of the SOP; Go forward in proclaiming to the world the good news of salvation and the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ.

God's grace is leading people all over the world to "Go Forward." We must continually lift up the banner of public evangelism at all times. The proclamation of God's grace and the three angels' messages are

changing people everywhere. The Holy Spirit is working on the hearts of those who hear this precious Advent message through your words and evangelistic witness.....your proclamation of God's grace. We need to integrate evangelism into every aspect of life such as many places have done including the great South American Division where "integrated evangelism" is simply a way of life.

One example of this comes to us from the Euro-Asia Division. A few years ago, Vasili was a police officer in Moldova. He became convicted about Bible truth and this precious Advent message and wanted to be baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist. When he told his family about his new found faith, his father and mother said they would disown him, his brother said he would no longer consider him a brother, his wife, Galina, said she would divorce him, and his police commander said he would never give him Sabbaths off.

Vasili agonized with God praying that He would give him a direct answer to prayer through simply opening his Bible to a text. What should he do? He opened his Bible and by God's grace, his eyes caught the words of Matthew 10:35-38 where Jesus explains how family can be our enemies and says that if you love father or mother more than Christ, you are not worthy of Christ. Vasili felt led to heed Jesus' command to take up his cross and follow Him.

Vasili thanked God. He made his decision. He went to the Seventh-day Adventist church and was baptized. When he told his wife that he had been baptized, she said she already had divorce papers ready. Vasili didn't get agitated but told her he loved her.

Believing that they would support her objections, Galina accompanied Vasili to tell his family the news of his baptism. But to her surprise, Vasili's parents and brother accepted his decision without objection.

Vasili next went to his commanding police officer with his letter of resignation, explaining that he had been baptized. The officer said "What is that? Take it away and take off one week to think about things." After a week, Vasili returned and again offered his resignation. Instead of accepting it, the commanding officer promoted Vasili so he wouldn't have Sabbath conflicts.

About this time, Vasili's wife, Galina, developed a serious problem at her work where she was the cashier. The total for the day didn't add up and the company said she owed the money. In desperation she asked Vasili to pray for her and he invited her to pray with him about the problem. The next day Galina found the accounting error for the exact amount of money. Vasili invited her to give her heart to God for answering their prayer, but she refused.

Later Galina's mother got cancer and Vasili and Galina visited her and prayed for her. Through God's intervention she was healed! Galina's heart was softened and she went straight to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was baptized. I'm so happy to report to you today that Vasili Garascuic is now the treasurer of the Moldova Union and by God's grace Vasili and Galina are present with us today. Would you kindly stand? They represent thousands of conversion experiences through the power of the Holy Spirit. Praise God for the saving power of His grace!

My brothers and sisters here in this Georgia Dome and around the world, through the power of the Holy Spirit proclaim God's grace and the three angels' messages. We are a beautifully diverse church, but united in Christ and this precious Biblical message. We are an international family from every corner of the globe proclaiming God's grace as we "Go Forward" united by the Holy Spirit and our foundational Biblical beliefs.

What a precious message for this last-day Advent movement to carry to the world! The proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages to call people back to the true and Biblical worship of God.

What a Creator! Redeemer! High Priest! Advocate! Friend! What a God!

Jesus is coming soon!! Soon we will see in the eastern sky a small, dark cloud about half the size of a man's fist. It will get larger and larger and brighter and brighter. All of heaven will pour out for this climax of earth's history. Everyone will see Him at the same time through a miracle of heaven. And there seated in the middle of millions of angels will be the One we have been waiting for... not the humble broken Lamb, not the High Priest, but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ our Redeemer! We will look up and say, "This is the God we have waited for." Christ will look down and say, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord" and we will rise to meet the Lord in the air to go home to be with Him forever... the beautiful end of the Advent journey!

If the Lord's wonderful love and plan of salvation---His triumphant grace---has touched your heart and you would like to renew your commitment to Him and the Seventh-day Adventist mission as you return home to proclaim His grace, you want to ask for revival and reformation in your life and the church, you want the presence of the Holy Spirit and the latter rain as you proclaim God's grace, you want to proclaim the three angels' messages to others, and you want to place your life and personal witness in the hands of our Almighty Redeemer, High Priest and Coming King to face the judgment through His blood, merits, mercy and grace.....If you wish to humbly ask the Lord to take control of your life and help you to proclaim God's grace in these last days of earth's history would you quietly stand to your feet just now and remain standing in commitment to Him?

I invite you to accept Christ's marvelous grace in your life, to renew your commitment to Him and this great Advent movement, to proclaim God's grace, and to ask the Lord to help this church "Go Forward." Before singing our theme song and then our final benediction, let us seek God together in prayer.....I invite you to remain standing and now turn to the person next to you or behind you.....and in heartfelt, humble prayer.....plead with the Lord for revival and reformation so the Holy Spirit can lead God's remnant church as we "Go Forward" proclaiming God's grace and the three angels' messages. Please pray together and remain standing.