

The Devil is Wroth

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For our sermon text this morning, would you turn with me to **Revelation 12:17** . . . Let us read it in unison:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Thank you.

Today, our denomination is facing a crisis such as it has never before encountered. It is so broad and enters into so many areas of church life, that many are uncertain as to its cause or how to solve it.

There are arguments, conflicts, and lowered standards. There are broken promises, squabbling, unjust actions, and even lawsuits.

There is an invasion of worldliness on a scale never before seen among us. Our hearts cry to God for answers, for we love our beloved Church. We weep and we pray. As the prophet said, “We sigh and we cry.” Yet we know not what to do.

This morning, standing before you, **I want to tell you the answer.** There is a solution to our denominational problem! There is a balm in Gilead. God has provided the answer. —Indeed, He provided it before we needed it.

The answer to every single problem in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is found in just one sentence. Here it is:

We must return to the Spirit of Prophecy.

Let us read the verse again:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

In that passage we find both the cause and the solution. Yet those words were given us by the God of heaven almost 2,000 years ago. Long ago we were mercifully warned that the problems we now face were coming,—and we were told how to meet them.

First, there is the cause:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God.”

The cause of the problem is simple enough: **Satan wants to destroy Sabbathkeepers** in these last

days. Why? Because they are the ones who want to keep the commandments of God! Those he cannot destroy, he intends to corrupt. And he is hard at work.

But with the warning was given the solution, and it is just as obvious:

“Which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Beloved, God's Word tells us **there is only one way we can conquer Satan** in this matter! We must keep the commandments of God,—and we must adhere to the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the Spirit of Prophecy!

Revelation 19:10, last part, reads thus:

“For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.”

Our kind heavenly Father knew that His earthly children down at the end of time would need inspired counsel, in addition to the Bible. Why? Because Satan would be working so subtly in the end time, that God knew His children would need additional information to resist all the complex and varied deceptions they would encounter. Without the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, they would be led away from keeping the commandments of God. Do not forget that!

But, my friends, Revelation 12:17 is not only a warning, but also a promise. If we faithfully adhere to all God's inspired counsels for these last days,—we will be able to resist the dragon's attacks and chase that dragon out of our midst!

Yet only those who are humbly clinging to Christ and in His strength obeying God's Inspired Books will be able to do this.

The fact stands solid that both the keeping of God's commandments and the adhering to the Spirit of Prophecy **can only be done through the enabling merits of Christ's grace.** For, without our cooperation, He cannot give us the victory.

We urgently need this divine protection!

My friends, we live in the terrible time of Revelation 12:17! But if, by His grace, we are faithful to His Word, **He will make us a defended fortress**—impregnable to all the assaults of the enemy. Here is the promise, given by the servant of the Lord, in **Desire of Ages, 324:**

“The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall

be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan.”

No room for dragons in the heart of the one who is fully yielded to Christ. Thank God for the keeping power of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!

But He requires obedience. And that which we must obey is given us in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. *We do not find the requirements for salvation given anywhere else.* Unless, in the strength of Christ, we choose to render that obedience, we shall fail in the battles of life. The dragon will take control.

Here are the next few sentences in the above passage. They are deep with significance:

“But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place.”

The conditions met, the promise is sure. Let us read it again:

“The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own.”

That promise can be fulfilled in our lives! That promise can be fulfilled in our church! Our people can once again become a fortress, protected by the angels of God, against all the assaults of the devil.

But God waits for our decision in the matter. *We have a part to act. We have a work to do.*

We have changes to make.

And **we dare not wait** any longer to start making them.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

That verse comes at the end of an astonishing chapter. Revelation 12 is a 2,000-year history of the Christian Church. If we would learn how the dragon destroys in verse 17, we need only look at the verses before it.

But, if we want to understand far more clearly those earlier verses in Revelation 12, we should read the **first half** of *Great Controversy*. It tells us the methods Satan has used in past ages.

Then, **turning to the last half of that book**, we are given a detailed view of the meaning of Revelation 12:17—and all of Revelation 13! The curtain is drawn back from the future.

Quite consistently, from beginning to end, **the devil has tried to take the Word of God from God’s people.**—Either take it out of their hands or take it out of their hearts.

He takes it out of their hands, by gathering up the books, confiscating, and burning them.

But when he cannot do that, he works to take them out of our hearts. And that is far more subtle. According to Revelation 12:17, Satan especially targets the Spirit of Prophecy. He must get it away from us before he can successfully work our ruin. Oh, why so slow to recognize his devices! Why do we not recognize what he is trying to do!

1 Selected Messages, page 48:

“Satan is . . . constantly pressing in the spurious—to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’ (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” [See 2 SM 78 for context].

Satan whispers that the Spirit of Prophecy is not important. *He tells us we don’t need to read it.* He sends his agents to cleverly hint that the books have been changed, that they were written by someone else, or that they are old-fashioned and do not apply to our modern world.

Anything to downgrade the Spirit of Prophecy,—yet that is what we see all around us in the church today!

Then, having set the Spirit of Prophecy books back in the shadow,—*it becomes quite easy for him to parade the world right on into the church!*

Oh, how we mourn over our mounting problems and wonder how we can arrive at solutions. **But the answer is found** right here in Revelation 12:17.

Yet, instead of humbly obeying God’s Word, **there are those among us who want to modernize the Church**—and tear it from its historic foundations!

But I tell you **the solution is not to be found in changing** our historic beliefs. It is not to be found in lowering the standards and aping the world. It is not found in copying the excited, wild music worship services of the Pentecostals. It is not found in inventing strange new teachings and practices, or discarding earlier ones.

—**The solution will only be found in returning to our Bible-Spirit of Prophecy origins!** For it is only in obedience to the God-given teachings and

standards of our forefathers, that our Church can find peace with God and with one another. It is only as we take down the precious Spirit of Prophecy books and read them again that we can find the answers we seek.

God's ways are simple and direct, and they **are only found in His Word**. Nowhere else can we clearly see how far we have strayed from the right path or how to return to it.

God's Inspired Books have the answer we need. They will solve the problems in our homes, in our congregations, in our board meetings, in our church schools, in our academies, in our colleges, in our hospitals, in our publishing houses, and in our executive offices on all levels.

We need to return to God's Word! **There is no other way out of the crisis** we face today. Bandages will not help. Lawsuits will not solve it. New-modeling our teachings and the *Church Manual* will not do it. Copying the ordination patterns of the liberal churches will not deepen our spirituality. We are fast becoming a hollow tree, ready to fall over when a strong wind comes along.

What we need is a change of heart, and that can only come as we bow in humility before God's Written Word, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, *and accept both as the highest authority governing our lives and our Church.*

Why is it, when we hold a board meeting or church meeting on any level,—that the Word of God is not opened to find the answers we need? Agendas are written ahead of time; yet no one is ever instructed to search God's Word in advance of the meeting, to find what God says about the subjects to be deliberated on.

All we do is talk for awhile and then take a vote, to find consensus. Do you know what "consensus" is? It is a majority of opinion. We will perish if we keep bowing to opinion.

In this solemn time in history, I tell you: **It is God's Written Word that must be opened!** It is God's Books which must be studied. It is God's Writings which must be obeyed. Otherwise, there is no hope for us.

People who live by consensus become shallow in their thinking and keep making mistakes. They inevitably wander further from the Divinely given Blueprint.

Oh, my people, we need men today who will stand like a rock for Scripture, as did Martin Luther!

Let me, for a moment, share with you what made **Martin Luther** so great, what made him a man of God!

At the Diet of Worms, when he expected to die for saying these words, he declared that God's Word was of higher authority than committees or councils. Please understand, Luther did not downgrade

the importance of committees; but he declared that the Inspired Writings must be the authority at those meetings. Quoting now, **Great Controversy, 160:**

"The Reformer answered: 'Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.' Thus stood this righteous man upon the sure foundation of the Word of God."

Do you and I take our stand where Martin Luther took his,—on the Word of God? *Or are we quick to abandon it when our church jobs are threatened?*

Martin Luther also said **we must not place our children and youth** in schools where the Word of God is not honored as highest in authority. **Great Controversy, 140-141:**

"He [Luther] wrote thus of the universities: 'I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the great gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.' "

Martin Luther recognized a great truth which we are prone to forget. **Let me repeat it:**

" 'Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.' "

Back then, men were willing to die rather than disobey Heaven's written commands. In addition to Luther, other Christian leaders arose in Germany who also determined to stand for God's Word, as he had done.

At the Diet of Spires in 1529, they refused to surrender their faith in the Word of God, even though they knew that, by so doing, it would lead to war—which it did—the terrible Thirty Years War.

Great Controversy, 203; here is their public declaration at the Diet of Spires—the biggest "church trial" in the sixteenth century:

"The Lord forbids the teaching of any other

doctrine . . . this Holy Book is, in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness. We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His only Word . . . This Word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.’ ”

Even their enemies knew their source of strength. Others knew the Lutherans would take their stand on God’s Inspired Writings. **Great Controversy, 202:**

“The imperial party were convinced that the Christian princes would adhere to the Holy Scriptures as superior to human doctrines and requirements; and they knew that wherever this principle was accepted, the papacy would eventually be overthrown.”

Do you see that? **Satan cannot overcome those who stand on God’s Word!**

Well, friends, there you have it. **This is what God is waiting for today.** And He cannot accept anything less. Why? *Because if He ignores our increasing rejection of His Inspired Books, He denies Himself!*

We love our Church; we value our good leaders; we want to press together. But we can only do so when our lives, our committees, and our programs are based on what God’s Word says. *To do any less is a denial of the Holy Spirit which inspired those writings.*

Some say the Church is going to the dogs. Others say everything is doing just fine. But **I tell you the only hope of the Church is returning to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy!**

It is not a new-modeling of the Church that we need. It is old-time religion.

But how can we have it? Where do we start? What do we do?

Once again, **the answer is simple. It is found in the last part of Revelation 12:17:** “Keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” We must start doing this individually.

Draw a circle around yourself and a larger one around your children, and a still larger one around your family. **And, inside them, start reading and obeying the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—as though your life depended on it!** And, as you do so,

you will soon realize that it does.

When Satan tempts us to set aside those precious books, he is thereby enabled to spread a veil over our minds, so we think we are doing right when we are headed in the wrong direction. But that “veil spread over all the nations” (Isaiah 25:7) can only be taken away when we return to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:16) and obey His Written Word.

I tell you that **the veil of doubt, discouragement and worry, which compromise and sin has cast over you, will be swept away,—when, in the enabling strength of Christ, you begin reading again and start obeying fully God’s Written Word.**

That peace of heart and sweet joy in the Lord that you once had will come back! The dove of peace will return! You will once again be a humble, happy child of God. You will have the deep assurance that you are in the hollow of His hand.

Only then will you be able to begin enlarging your circle and, by your prayers and encouragement, help still others find their way back to God.

Let us read the warning again—and, as we do so, turn it into a promise! Let us read it together out loud:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The dragon wants to war with us. He wants to destroy us, our children, and our Church. But in Christ Jesus we can have the victory! **For now we know the secret.** *And if we will write that secret in our hearts—by His enabling grace, keeping God’s commandments, and clinging to all of His Written Word—we will individually be accounted worthy to be part of “the remnant” which will go through to the end!*

Let us pray.

Oh, our Father, the only place in the Bible where the “remnant” in the last days is defined is in Revelation 12:17. Each one of us wants to be assured a place in that remnant. And now we know how it can be done. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy must once again be made the supreme authority in our decisions and our actions. Only then can we truly keep Thy commandments. Thank you, Father, for showing us the way. Please strengthen us, this day, to begin making daily, careful reading of Thy Word a habit. For only then can we truly begin changing for the better. Only then can we become more like Thee. In Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen. —vf

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