

Is Present Truth Divisive among God's People?

Presentation by Noel del Rosal

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise your name not only through our songs but also in our hearts for the wonderful Word that you have provided to us. We seek to understand better the prayer that our Lord Savior Jesus Christ prayed for us, his disciples, and followers through the ages, especially at the end of the world. As we week, we look forward for the accomplishment of that prayer in our own lives, a prayer for unity in your body and we pray humbly that you may cleanse us, and at this time instruct us, so that we can understand your will better. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

A common objection against receiving the Present Truth message for the hour is that it creates division within the church. "You shall know them by their fruits," objectors often say, implying that if a message unites must be from God, if it produces separation it must be from the Devil. In order to contrast this superficiality of this reasoning with what Inspiration teaches, we could ask: Is unity always connected with God? No. Satan often unites. Is division always connected with Satan? No, for God often divides. Let us see examples of this.

Unity as promoted by Satan. We see in 1 Corinthians 6:16 an example of an unlawful union. It is called "fornication," and the Scripture reads,

"(16) What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh."

We find another example in Revelation 17:12-13, in the example of the ten kings. This is another unlawful relationship that can be applied spiritually to the union between church and state. The verse reads,

"(12) And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. (13) These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast."

In *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 1, p. 297, we read,

"'These have one mind.' There will be a universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy of Satan's forces. 'And shall give their power and strength unto the beast.'"

And we have a third example. It is found in Isaiah 4:1; and it is an example of unity among churches. We call this "ecumenism."

"(1) And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man ..." -- ["Women" in the Bible we know symbolizes churches] -- "... shall take hold of one man ..." -- [the Man of Sin] -- "... saying, We will eat our own bread, ..." -- [our own teachings] -- "... and wear our own apparel ..." -- [our self-righteousness] -- "... only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."

Now, let us see examples of division introduced by God. First, let us turn to Genesis 3:15; a well-known passage, Genesis 3:15.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We see here an enmity, a supernatural enmity, introduced by God as soon as men fell into sin. God had pledged to rescue men, to separate him from Satan and from perdition and bring him back to him at a great infinite cost to Himself.

And we see in James 4:4, for a second witness of division introduced by God; James 4:4. We call this enmity against carnal mindedness, the mind of the world. In the words of the apostle James are these:

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

In *Testimonies*, Volume 2, commenting on this, Sister Ellen G. White says on page 167,

"Why should you wish to keep the friendship of your Lord's enemies, or to be influenced by their opinions? 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?' If the heart were right there would be a more decided separation from the world."

So we see that that enmity, we have to ask God to place that enmity within our hearts so that we have no relish, no desire, for worldliness, any worldly pursuits.

Satan works contrary to the purposes of God. Whatever God seeks to unite in righteousness, Satan will try to separate through sin. Whatever God seeks to separate, Satan will try to unite in compromise. So what marks the difference between the unit that originates with God and the unity promoted by Satan?

God's unity is based on truth, His more sure word of prophecy. Satan's version contains just enough truth to make falsehood palatable. Truth, we know, is a power that unites. And we find in Psalms 86:11 the following words:

“Teach me that way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.”

And we see that if we walk in the truth as God teaches it to us, it will unite our hearts in fear; we will fear God and give glory to His name.

And in John 17:17, we find the prayer of Jesus for His disciples. John 17:17 reads,

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

And in John 17: 21,

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

And Sister White has a very interesting comment on these versus in *Gospel Workers*, 1892 edition, p. 391:

“Jesus prayed for His disciples, ‘That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one In us,’ Just before He said, ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’ And He had given them the promise, ‘When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.’ Through the Holy Spirit, Christ will open more clearly to those who believe on Him that which He has inspired holy men to write concerning the truth. And it is thus that the unity for which Christ prayed is to be effected. We are to receive sanctification through obedience through the Word and through the Spirit of truth.

“We cannot surrender the truth in order to accomplish this union”

She is talking about the union that Christ prayed for:

“We cannot surrender the truth in order to accomplish this union, for the very means by which it is to be gained is sanctification through the truth. Human wisdom will change all this, thinking this basis of union too narrow. Men would effect a union through conformity to popular opinions, through a compromise with the world. But truth is God’s basis for the unity of His people.”

So this comment lays the foundation for the understanding in this study. Truth takes preeminence above everything else. Truth is the basis for the unity of God’s people. And we need to be thoroughly sanctified through the truth in order that all may be one.

What is the meaning of “sanctified”? It means to separate or to set apart. Therefore, we can conclude that truth is the power that separates, and we see that in Matthew 10:34-36.

“(34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ...” -- and the sword, we know, is the Word of God --

“(35) For I am come to SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND THE DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND THE DAUGHTER IN LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER IN LAW. (36) And A MAN’S FOES SHALL BE THEY OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.”

In *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 6, p. 280, we read:

“We are to stand on the elevated platform of eternal truth. The edge of the sword of truth is not to be dulled. We must take a straightforward course, using the truth as a mighty cleaver, to separate from the world men and women who will stand as God’s peculiar people.”

Based on this quote we could ask what is the “cleaver.” What is the cleaver? Sister White refers to this mighty cleaver of truth, but what is a cleaver?

Now, the definition we found in *Webster’s Dictionary* from 1828 says “cleaver” is a noun and has two meanings. It means “one who cleaves, or that which cleaves” and it also means “a butcher’s instrument for cutting animal bodies into joints or pieces.” And although the spirit of Prophecy uses the term “cleaver” denoting separation, like cutting with a butcher’s knife, it is interesting to notice that the same word, “cleaver,” also has the connotation of unity.

And we read the two definitions for “cleave.” In the first definition it is a verb; it means to stick, to adhere, to hold to, to unite or to be united closely in interest or affection, or to adhere with strong attachment.

And we find two examples in the Bible, Genesis 2:24,

“(2) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

And in Joshua 23:8, “But cleave unto the Lord [Jehovah] your God ...” we see there one meaning for “cleave.”

In the second meaning, we see that “cleave” means to part or to divide by force, to split ... or sever the cohering parts of a body by cutting or by the application of force, as to cleave wood, cleave a rock or as in Psalms 74:15 to cleave the flood.

So the mighty cleaver of truth separates us from sin so that we can be united in righteousness to God.

And in *Testimonies to Southern Africa*, p. 85, we read,

“By the mighty cleaver of truth we have all been quarried out from the world. God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages, all nationalities, and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His temple.”

We see that He separates us from the world and then He gathers us.

We find in *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 464:

“The mighty cleaver of truth has taken them out of the world as rough stones that are to be hewed and squared and polished for the heavenly building. They must be hewed by the prophets, with reproof, warning, admonition and advice, that they may be fashioned after the divine Pattern; this is the specified work of the Comforter, to transform heart and character, that men may keep the way of the Lord....”

Here we see a three-step process: We need to be hewed, and squared, and polished. This process is described as the specified work of the Comforter. According to John 16:7-8 we know

that the work of the Comforter is to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and this work, we are told, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the prophets or, in other words, through a prophetic message.

So we can conclude from this quote, the mighty cleaver of truth is a three-step process that the Holy Spirit performs in us, using the writings or using a prophetic message.

So what is the mighty cleaver of truth? We have a more specific definition: *Testimonies*, Volume 5, p. 455:

“God has called his church in this day, as he called ancient Israel, to stand as the light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world.”

So the Three Angels' Messages are the sharp instrument designed by God to sever us or separate us completely from false teachings and from worldliness; and for what purpose? That we may be brought to sacred nearness to God through a covenant relationship; and, we find this in Exodus 19:3-6:

“(3) And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; (4) Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and I how I bare you on eagles' wings, ...” -- it sounds like the Three Angels' Messages -- “... and brought you unto myself.”

He first separates us from Egypt [the world] and through these eagles' wings He brings us close to Himself.

“(5) Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: (6) and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

So God calls us to be His peculiar people. To express fear of experiencing separation may be an indication that we do not understand the purpose of the Three Angels' Messages or the extent of purification that God has designed to accomplish with those Messages, especially for those who look forward to be translated to Heaven.

In *Letter 53 (1887)*, we read:

“We cannot, my brethren and sisters, float along with the current of the world. The work for us to do is to come out and be separate. This is the only way we can walk with God as did Enoch.... Like Enoch we are called upon to have a strong, living and working faith; it is the only way to be laborers together with God. We must meet the conditions laid down in the Word of God or die in our sins. We must know what moral changes are essential to be made in our characters through the grace of Christ in order to be fitted for the mansions above.”

So we see that unity with God increases in the degree that we separate from idolatry, worldly customs, habits, and practices; and, unless we are faithfully performing a specific work given by God among people who walk in darkness, we should separate from them also.

In *Adventist Home*, p. 459-460, we read:

“The world is not to be our criterion. We are not to associate with the ungodly and partake of their spirit, for they will lead the heart away from God to the worship of false gods. The steadfast soul, firm in the faith, can do much good; he can impart blessings of the highest order with whom he associates, for the law of the Lord is in his heart. But we cannot willingly associate with those who are trampling upon the law of God, and preserve our faith pure and untarnished. We shall catch the spirit, and unless we separate from them, we shall be bound up with them at last, to share their doom.

“It was by associating with idolaters and joining in their festivities that the Hebrews were led to transgress God's law and bring His judgments upon the nation. So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin. ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean.’ God requires of His people now as great a distinction from the world, in customs, habits, and principles, as He required of Israel anciently.”

Jesus prayed specifically for unit among those who are sanctified through the truth and no one else. In John 17 -- let's turn there again -- we notice the distinction that Jesus made. In verse 8:

“(8) For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”

We see that His disciples received the words of Jesus; they accepted them.

Verse 9:

“(9) I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”

So a clear distinction, He is not expecting unity with those of the world or among those of the world and God's people. He is specifically praying for those who have received the truth.

And in verse 14:

“(14) I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

So understanding that this prayer is to be answered in the remnant church, we should not be satisfied advocating merely a superficial form of unity, where we agree to disagree; because, tolerance is not unity. “Tolerance” simply means the allowance of that which is not wholly approved, while “unit” means the state of being one, oneness. Unit is to be of one mind, and which mind are we to have as God's people? The mind of Christ.

Sadly in Adventism we experience the coexistence of contradictory understandings of what constitutes truth. There is confusion, many voices saying opposite things about truth; but, the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 “what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” and “what communion hath light with darkness?” and “what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” “... for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I WILL DWELL IN THEM, AND WALK IN THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”

In *Review and Herald (March 22, 1887)*, we read:

“Are we awake to the work that is going on in the heavenly Sanctuary, or are we waiting for some compelling power to come upon the church before we shall arouse? Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? THAT TIME WILL NEVER COME (emphasis added).

“There are persons in the church who are not converted and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less. Iniquity abounds, and the people must be taught not to be satisfied with a form of godliness without the spirit and power. If we are intent upon searching our own hearts, putting away our sins, and correcting our evil tendencies, our souls will not be lifted up into vanity, we shall be distrustful of ourselves, having an abiding sense that our sufficiency is of God.”

In the Three Angels' Messages we see the unfolding of the everlasting gospel, the inevitable separation between two classes of worshippers. In *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 5, p. 425, we read:

“I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Fearful is his word, awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal or bind the wheat for the heavenly garner.’ These things should engage the whole mind, the whole attention. Again I was shown the necessity of those who believe we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily receiving or imbibing new error. I saw that neither young nor old should attend the assemblies of those who are in error and darkness: Said the angel, ‘Let the mind cease to dwell on things of no profit.’”

This point seems to be a stumbling block for many; because, yes, we have an awareness that worldliness is not good for us, that we should not associate loosely with the world or follow their customs. But, are we aware that in God's church there is warfare between opposing principles, that there is truth and error contending for the minds of God's people?

So what is to be our attitude as part of God's church, as part of God's remnant people? What is to be the priority, to simply tolerate the evil, tolerate falsehood around us just for the sake of getting along peacefully? Is that what God has called us to? Or, are we to give priority, especially at this time when God is presenting powerful truth from the Bible from within the Spirit of Prophecy that separates us from sin, from unrighteousness, and brings us closer to Him?

I believe we are to follow the same principle: we have to allow the Three Angels' Messages as a mighty cleaver to do its work completely and separate us from whatever it takes.

This process, it is described in *The Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 2, p. 225, in the following words:

“God leads His people on step by step. He brings them up to different points which are calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point, but fall off at the next. At every advanced point the heart is tested and tried a little closer. If the professed people of God ...” -- Who are the professed people of God? Seventh Day Adventists -- “...find their hearts opposed to the straight work of God, it should convince them that they have a work to do to overcome, or to be spued out of the mouth of the Lord. Said the angel, ‘God will bring His work closer and closer to test them, and prove every one of His people.’ Some are willing to receive one point, but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. ...” -- where are we in Jesus? Outside -- “... They prize something higher than the truth and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. ...” -- therefore, they will receive instead a strong delusion -- “... Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols, and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If they will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, then their pride and evil passions, the angels of God have their charge, ‘They are joined to their idols, let them alone,’ and they pass on to their work, leaving them with their evil traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will be fitted by the latter rain for translation.”

So we see clearly that the only path to genuine unity, between Christ and between His own body, is being delineated in the Three Angels' Messages, that mighty cleaver of truth that is to separate us completely from anything that may shut out Jesus from our hearts.

And we can see that, looking back into the history of the Jews in the time of Christ and also of the protestant churches of the Millerites. In *Early Writings*, p. 259-260 -- it is a very well known passage to us; I am just going to point to some paragraphs from this:

“Those who rejected the testimony of John [the Baptist] were not benefited from the teachings of Jesus. ...” -- We see a progression -- “... Their opposition to the message that foretold His coming placed them where they could not readily receive the strongest evidence that He was the Messiah. Satan led on those who rejected the message of John to go still farther, to reject and crucify Christ. In doing this they placed themselves where they could not receive the blessing on the day of Pentecost, which would have taught them the way into the heavenly sanctuary. ...”

And then she explains on that that they continued offering their useless sacrifices in the temple when the sacrifice had already been accepted; and, therefore, we are told, the Jews were left in total darkness. Those who did not keep pace with truth were left in darkness.

And Sister White also says something similar of the protestant churches in the time of the Millerites:

“Those who rejected the first message could not be benefited by the second; neither were they benefited by the midnight cry, which was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. And by rejecting the two former messages, they have so darkened their understanding that they can see no light in the third angel’s message, which shows the way into the Most Holy Place. I saw as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches have crucified these messages [Bro. del Rosal indicates the 1843 Chart behind him]; and, therefore, they have no knowledge of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefitted by the intercession of Jesus there.”

We have to remember that both ancient Israel in the time of Christ and the protestant churches in the time of the Millerites, both of them, were God’s church at those particular times; and both were confronted with a threefold testing message and only those who kept pace with the advancing light, those who were willing to be purified by the truth as they were willing to put away sin were the ones who partook of the showers of the Holy Spirit, having experienced the unity that Christ prayed for. For the rest of the professed believers who failed these tests, their probation closed; and they were the majority of them and they were left in total darkness.

Is there something that we could learn from these experiences?

Finally, we want to focus a little more on unity, having understood that it is to be developed upon the platform of truth. And we read in *Selected Messages*, Volume 2, p. 87:

“Oh, I wish that we had far greater wisdom in all things than we now have! One thing every worker in the vineyard of the Lord must learn, that is, to practice the prayer of Christ, to move us one in Christ Jesus. Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one, as He is one with the Father. The enemy is at work, to divide, to scatter. Now as never before He will make the determined efforts to scatter our forces. ... The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which means little, they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living center [Bro. del Rosal indicates the 1843 Chart and 1850 Charts behind him]. The truths we present from the Bible are as firm and immovable as the throne of God.”

And she tells us in *Counsels to the Church*, p. 290-291:

“Strive earnestly for unity. Pray for it, work for it. It will bring spiritual health, elevation of thought, nobility of character, heavenly-mindedness, enabling you to overcome selfishness and evil surmisings, and to be more than conquerors through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you. Crucify self; esteem others better than yourself. Thus you will be brought into oneness with Christ. Before the heavenly universe, before the church and the world, you will bear unmistakable evidence that you are God’s sons and daughters. God will be glorified in the example that you set.

“The world needs to see worked out before it the miracle that binds the hearts of God’s people together in Christian love. It needs to see the Lord’s people sitting together in heavenly places in Christ. Will you not give in your lives an evidence of what the truth of God can do for those who love and serve Him? God knows what you can be. He knows what divine grace can do for you if you will be partakers of the divine nature.

“I beseech you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there will not be divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. [1 Corinthians 1:10]’

“Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord’s people.”

And we want to end with this quote that we find in *Christ Triumphant*, p. 22:

“All who are united with Christ will come out of the world and be separate. They will not enter into the world from any choice of their own. They will not by their associations place themselves in the way of temptation. They will not be educated in worldly lines. They will choose to come into the school of Christ and learn of the great Teacher. He invites every soul, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ -- even the Latter Rain, rest and refreshing.”

And finally, let us turn to Isaiah 52:7-8. We want to close with this promise that God’s Word presents to us, in this final generation. Isaiah 52:7-8:

“(7) How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringest good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (8) Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

Let us pray.

Closing prayer: Merciful God and Heavenly Father, we confess our own unworthiness, for we are no better Lord than anyone else but, for some reason that we cannot understand except we accept by faith that you love us greatly with infinite love, that you have revealed to us the very truths that are going to sanctify your people at this time and we have received them and we want to continue receiving them and allow them to do their work and allow them to separate us from anything, even if it is necessary from any earthly support, that we may be faithful to you until the end, so that we can see the fulfillment of these promises of our Lord and Savior. Please be with us, we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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