

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Every Wind of Doctrine

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Father, we have saturated this Word, this meeting with prayer, and I pray thee, that You take the feeble words of the preacher and indict them with the Spirit to move upon our hearts to make a difference for the kingdom. In Christ's name. Amen.

2017 was a special year in the Finley family. And the reason it was is my wife and I began ministry in 1967. We were married in that year as well, so we celebrated 50 years of marriage and 50 years of ministry this last year. We just praise God for that. We just praise God for that. You know when you look back over your ministry after 50 years, there are certain high points of ministry. You enjoy every place that you have ever served, but there are special places. And for us, one of the special places that we served was when we worked in St. Albans, and I was division Ministerial Secretary of the Trans-European Division. It's a very special division in the world - one of our smallest divisions, but certainly, it was a meaningful experience for us. When we were living in St. Albans, we often went to London, and one of the favorite places in London that I loved to visit was the underground war room of Winston Churchill. It was there that Churchill plotted strategy during World War II to defeat the onslaught of Hitler's forces. In that underground war room, you find that although the allied forces lost many, many battles, although it was a long-protracted war, there was a strategy in that war to win.

Now recently, there's been a book written by a man by the name of Simon Singh. And the title of the book really attracted me, it's called *The Codebreakers. The Codebreakers*. And the book tells the story of the English codebreakers at Bletchley Park, not far from London, who worked to crack the enigma code of the Germans. Now, the problem was there were 159 quintillion combinations. Now, if you know what a quintillion is, you can tell me after the meeting because I have no clue. Simon Singh says in his book *The Codebreakers* that there are 159 quintillion combinations of the German codes.

So, the Germans were sending their codes to their U-boats and to their varying forces. Alex Turing in Bletchley Park was a brilliant British engineer. He began looking at these codes and he figured out how to break them in real time. He sent messages to the allied forces so they would know exactly where the U-boats were, exactly where the enemy forces were, and because of the codebreakers, many scholars of World War II say this, that at worst, Alex Turing's work shortened the war by two years. At best, he won the war.

If you know the strategy of the enemy, it enables you to plot a strategy of victory. The Seventh-day Adventist church, in my view, is facing today its greatest opportunities. We have never seen the opportunities to communicate the Gospel to the ends of the earth through satellite telecasts, through radio, through internet, through printed page. Geographical boundaries can be bridged. Totalitarian regimes cannot keep out the proclamation of the Gospel. I think we're facing our greatest opportunities.

But I also believe that we are facing our greatest challenges today. Since the devil knows that a united church focused on the proclamation of the Gospel in the light of the three angels' messages preached to the entire world, will usher in the coming of Jesus. The devil will do everything in his power to hinder the progress of God's work. Now, whether it's false ideas about the trinity, whether it's an emphasis on the feasts, whether it's a mistaken understanding of contemplative prayer and Christian meditation, whether it's the emerging church, whether it's debates about creation, questions about the sanctuary or the remnant, whether it's the re-application of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, or setting speculative dates for the coming of Jesus in some kind of jubilee chart, the devil will use all of his cunning to distract Seventh-day Adventists from the mission to reach the world with the Gospel.

Now, this should not surprise us. False teachings should not surprise us because Paul predicted throughout the book of Acts that the church in the New Testament and down through the ages would be impacted by false teachers. Paul in counseling to Timothy states that some will depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits. So, the idea of heresy, the idea of false teachings, not only in the world, but impacting the church, should not be shocking to us.

The primary passage that I want to study with you this morning is Ephesians, the eighth chapter. So, if you have your Bible, I invite you to take it and turn to Ephesians, the fourth chapter. Ephesians, the fourth chapter, and we're going to be looking at verses 8-11. Ephesians Chapter 4, and we're going to begin by looking at verse 8 and continue down through a number of passages here. Ephesians Chapter 4, we begin with verse eight. "Therefore," he says, "when he ascended up on high, he led captive and gave gifts to men."

Let's skip down to Verse 11, "And he himself gave some to be apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." Now, notice church leadership, apostles, divine administrators, the gift of prophesy, evangelists, pastors, teachers were for the equipping of the saints, the preparing of the believers for their work in ministry, to edify and build up the body of Christ.

Verse 13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Verse 13, talks about coming into the unity of the faith. It talks about the measure of the perfect man to the measure of the perfect fullness of Christ. So obviously, it's a verse that talks about the context of final events and a church on mission, a church reflecting the glory of Jesus to the world.

But in that context, it says in Verse 14, "That we're no longer children tossed to and fro carried about with every wind of doctrine. By the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love that we may grow up in all things." The phrase that has captured my imagination is this expression "every wind of doctrine." May I suggest to you that in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today, "every wind of doctrine" is blowing from the ultra-left to the ultra-right.

Ellen White comments on this expression “every wind of doctrine” in the *Review and Herald*, January 11, 1887, and it's a very lengthy article, but it's worth perusing. It's worth reading. I'll simply share with you one paragraph of that article. "The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There'll be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing." Every wind of doctrine.

I'd like to look at five winds that I see blowing in the church today: first, the dust storms of doubt; second, the pestilent-laden breezes of heresy; third, the fiery winds of fanaticism; fourth, the icy cold winds of formalism; fifth, the gentle zephyrs of Laodiceanism. Let's look at each of these winds.

First, the dust storms of doubt. If you ever have traveled through Texas ... I've got a few Texans here. If you have traveled through Texas, have you ever traveled through a Texas dust storm? Where are my Texans? Any Texans here today? Ever travel through a Texas dust storm, my brother? Many times. Amen. Yeah. You weren't saying Amen when you traveled through it, though. When you travel through a Texas dust storm. My son went to Southwestern Adventist University and we were living outside of Los Angeles at the time working with *It Is Written*. When you start driving through Texas, you think that thing is never going to end. I mean you just keep going and going and going, and you look at the odometer on your car, and you say, "I'm halfway through." And you just drove six hours, and you're halfway through the state. But if you're driving through some of those Texas prairies, and you see this swirl coming of dust, and pretty soon, that dust is everywhere, it surrounds your car, it's hard to know where the road is. And the dust storm of doubt clouds your vision. It confuses your thinking. You're not sure where your destination is.

Now the devil, down through the ages, has used the dust storm of doubt. Every wind of doctrine is blowing. In Eden, the devil came to Eve and he says, "Has God really said? Is this really true?" The dust storm of doubt. In the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, the devil comes to Jesus, Satan comes to Jesus, and he says to Jesus in Matthew 4:6, Jesus is there in the wilderness, and the devil says to him, "If you are the son of God..." Now that's rather a fascinating passage, and let's take a look at it for a moment to crystallize in our minds this idea of the devil sowing doubt. Matthew, the fourth chapter, Satan actually quotes scripture. Can you quote scripture in a way that you insinuate doubt in young minds? Can you quote scripture in a way that you lead your students to question the integrity of the Adventist church and its message?

Matthew, the fourth chapter. The devil actually quotes scripture here, but he insinuates doubt because he only quotes part of scripture, Matthew, Chapter 4:6, the devil says to him, "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He shall give his angels charge over you concerning you.'" Did David in Psalms actually say that? He did. But what does the devil leave out? The rest of the text says, "He shall give his angels charge over you concerning you that they'll keep you in all His ways."

So, the devil quotes part of scripture, not giving the totality of scripture, takes scripture out of context. Why? To insinuate doubt in the mind, indeed, of Jesus. Now if the devil can raise enough questions and create enough doubts, he can undermine confidence in the integrity of the Bible, in the veracity of Christ and who He is, and the veracity of the Adventist message. You see there's nothing wrong with questions, but the problem comes if you leave your congregation, or you leave your students with questions. You can raise questions, but if you don't lead them back to certainty, then you've left them with more doubts than you can accomplish.

Questions like this, "Was the world really created in six literal days? Isn't it enough simply to believe that there is a Creator God? I mean didn't Moses just use the language that he had available to him? What's all this business about a six-day literal creation? Does it really make any difference if there is literally a sanctuary in heaven? I mean heaven is so vast anyway. And should we really reconsider this idea of the investigative judgment in the 2,300 days? Isn't it really arrogant? I mean isn't it the height of arrogance to consider that the Adventist church is the remnant church? I mean isn't that quite arrogant? Isn't it legalistic to think that drinking a little bit of wine is contrary to the will of God? Is the papacy really the antichrist of prophecy or wasn't that the mentality of 19th Century thinking?"

Now, it's appropriate to ask questions, but when those questions insinuate doubt and they fill the heart with uncertainty, it destroys confidence in faith. It's necessary for the church to continually examine its theological foundations. But there are some things you have to settle. One thing about the New Testament church, they did not preach a Christ of doubt. They preached a Christ of certainty.

Take your Bible, please, and look at two amazing passages in the New Testament. Luke, the first chapter. The dust storms of doubt are eroding confidence in the integrity of the Adventist message in some circles today. When you look at the New Testament church, they did not go out and preach their doubts. They went out and preached their certainty. Luke, 1:3-4. "It seemed good to me," Luke says, "also having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write to you an orderly account most excellent Theophilus that you may know the certainty of those things that you are instructed." The certainty, the New Testament church, was certain that Christ died and rose from the dead. They were certain of a prophetic message. The New Testament church quoted the Old Testament preaching a prophetic message of the living risen Christ.

Notice 1 Peter 2:12, you don't win people by preaching doubt. You win people by preaching prophetic certainty. First Peter, Chapter 2. You're looking there at Verse 12. First Peter Chapter 2 and Verse 12, the scripture puts it this way. In the book of Peter, we're looking there at 1 Peter. The scripture talks about the reality of the fact of certainty. Peter speaks, I Peter Chapter 1:1 & 2 is what I want to look at. First Peter 1, Verse 1 and 2, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God ..." Now, notice this certainty, "In sanctification of the Spirit for obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Peter starts his epistle by talking about the fact of the belief that the New Testament church was elect, that God saw it in His foreknowledge, and that God had raised up that church for the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience in the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. You see the New Testament church charmed by love, amazed by grace, settled with the certainty of a living Christ preached the Word of God powerfully. It's all right to raise questions, but there comes a point in your spiritual experience where you have a settled certainty and a settled confidence.

My wife and I were married 50 years ago. We celebrated that 50th wedding anniversary this last summer. There are some things that I am closed-minded about. One of the sermons that's stirring in my soul, and I haven't had the courage to preach it yet, is called *The Value of Closed Mindedness*. *The Value of Closed Mindedness*. You hear a lot of people talking about you have to have an open mind today, that everything is kind of optional. But in some instances, there is a value of closed-mindedness.

I am closed-minded about any other woman. My wife and I have been married 50 years, and I'm not considering any other options. That took place 50 years ago, but I settled that thing 50 years ago. I don't get up every morning and think, "Man, I've got to consider all the options out there." I mean you married men out there, you married women, what if your husband got up and said, "Look, my dear. We have to have open minds about these things now. We've got to be quite open-minded about this. We've got to always be considering our options, always seeing if there's something better."

When I became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian when I was 17 years old, over 50 some odd years ago, there were certain things that I settled in my mind. There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus Christ is my Savior, no doubt in my mind that Jesus's death on the cross provides salvation full and fully. There's no doubt in my mind that Jesus has risen from the dead. I settled that. The Sabbath, the state of the dead, the great eternal verities of Adventism were settled. Somebody says, "Don't you ever have any questions?" I'd rather know all that I know and not know all I don't know than know all I don't know and not know what I know. And that's the truth. I'd rather know all that I know and not know all the things I don't know than know all the things I don't know and give up what I know. The dust storms of doubt are one of the devil's strategies to unsettle us in the certainty of a last day movement to take the Gospel to the world.

A great shaking is coming, and that shaking will be precipitated by doubt, but there is another wind that is blowing: the pestilent-laden breezes of heresy. You see there are some diseases that are air-borne. Air-borne disease is any disease that's transmitted through the air, and these pestilent-laden breezes of heresy travel rapidly from one person to another, from one church to another. They cause disease, spiritual disease. They cause spiritual death. They often leave conflict and division in their wake. They were present in the New Testament church, and they are present today.

Look at a couple of passages, I Timothy. First Timothy is largely, and 2 Timothy, counsel to a young preacher about guarding the church. They are counsel to young preacher about some of the issues as a young preacher that he would face. First Timothy, you're looking there at Chapter 4:1. "Now, the Spirit expressly says, that in the latter times, some will depart from the

faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." So here, some will depart from the faith. He's speaking about heresy that will come into the church.

Second Timothy, Chapter 2 mentions two individuals by name who were involved in a heretical movement. I pondered that a great deal, and it's a very fascinating passage. Second Timothy 2:14 and onward. "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved of God. A worker that does not need to be ashamed rightly defining the word of truth, but shun profane and vain babblings for they'll increase to more ungodliness."

He's talking about heresy. He's talking about doctrines that have no foundation in scripture at all that kind of blow through the church. He's talking about these pestilent-laden breezes of heresy. Now, he names two people. "Their message will spread like a cancer." Have you noticed that in a local congregation? Have you noticed that in a conference that when some heretical ideas begin to blow in the church, they blow like a cancer through the church. Often that takes place, and there's division, and there is conflict, and the church fails to fulfill its mission. But notice their message will spread like a cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort who have strayed concerning the truth. Now, notice, they stray concerning the truth saying that the resurrection has passed already, and they overthrow the faith of some.

I was thinking about that. Hymenaeus and Philetus say that the resurrection has passed already. What was their problem? What was the fundamental root of this heresy? What was the very foundation of the heresy? Were they right on the fact that there would be a resurrection? Were they right on that? But what was their problem? The timing. The timing. So, there was a heresy that came into the Christian church based on an inadequate understanding of timing. Think of all the heresies from the ultra-left and the ultra-right that can blow through the church today regarding timing, the re-application of time prophesies, the fanciful ideas about the jubilee theories, the ideas of re-time-setting, the ultra-right on timing issues, heretical ideas regarding timing.

But then think of those who want to try to recreate it in some way, in some fashion. They want to recreate the creation story. The whole issue of timing, "Sure God created the world, but He took tens of thousands of billions of years to accomplish that." Think of those that want to try to recalibrate the 2,300 days and re-look at those issues of timing. So, when you look at it, the heresies of Philetus and Hymenaeus are not necessarily gone.

It's interesting to look at some of the statements of Ellen White that have to do with some of the kind of heresies the church is going to face in the future. Let me just give you a few. *Christ's Object Lessons* page 127, "In every age, there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all-essential. New truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it." Will we see new vistas in the sanctuary today? Sure. Will we see a new beauty in the creation story? Definitely. Will we understand the Sabbath in more significant ways? Certainly. Will the prophesies of Daniel and Revelation even be understood more broadly? Yes. But any new revelation of truth always is based on the fundamental foundation that God has given His church.

Here's another one, Manuscript 3, 1899, "No line of our faith that has made us what we are is to be weakened." So, any revelation of new truth does not recalibrate or weaken old truth. We have the old landmarks of truth and duty. We are to stand firmly in defense of our principles and view of the world.

Here's another one, *Review and Herald*, May 25, 1905, "The enemy will bring in false theories." Who does that, everybody? The enemy. Such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points that there will be a departing from the faith. Where will we find safety unless it be in the truths that God has given us.

Here's another one, *First Selected Messages*, page 48. "The very last deception of Satan will be to make of non-effect the testimony of the Spirit of God." Now that is a fascinating statement. What does it mean to make of non-effect the spirit of prophesy? I accept it as a devotional writer, but she wasn't a historian so I rule that out. Wasn't a scientist so I rule that out, and she reflects 19th Century mentality on prophesy so I rule that out. "To make of non-effect the spirit of prophecy" is simply to approach it with human reasoning and limit it to devotional writing with no major prophetic authority.

Now there are at least five things that heresies tend to do. Number one, heresies tend to cloak themselves as new light. It's like I was walking on to preach at a major meeting, and I was preaching on the Christ of the book of Revelation, showing this theme that in Revelation, if you don't know very much about it, there's only four words you need to know: Jesus wins and Satan loses. That's the whole theme of Revelation. Jesus wins and Satan loses. End of the story. Every chapter, Jesus wins and Satan loses. Jesus is never defeated. So, as I'm walking on, a guy walks beside me and he says, "Pastor, you going to preach on Revelation?" "I am." He said, "I've got new light. Let me tell it to you. The church needs to know this. It has to know this." And he's tugging on me, and I'm getting ready to preach, and pretty soon, I get tired of the guy. So, I looked at him and said, "I got new light for you, Brother: Jesus wins. Satan loses. I'll see you later."

So, heresies tend to do at least four things. They often cloak themselves as new light. Secondly, they regularly position the one who purports this idea over and against the corporate body. In other words, if everybody only understood it like I did, the problems would be solved. Thirdly, they systematically undermine confidence in the church and its leadership. Any supposed theory of new light that undermines confidence in the church and its leadership is not new light, it's old heresy. Four, they produce individuals who have little interest in reaching the world, but they are obsessed with changing the church. I get nervous about people that are so interested in reforming the church that they don't know about the people that I preached to last night who are dying, who don't know Christ.

Last night in our meeting, we had one of the former Chiefs of Staff of the Pentagon with us. We had one of the leading judges of this area with us last night. We had one of the medical officers of the United States government with us last night. They came seeking a message of hope in Christ. When we become so occupied with changing the church and we lose a vision of reaching the world, I get nervous. Heresies tend to produce individuals who have little interest in reaching the world, and they are obsessed with changing the church. At times, they are

subtle and work to undermine confidence in the integrity of the Adventist message and church organization. Every wind of doctrine is going to be blowing. The dust storms of doubt, the pestilence-laden breezes of heresy, the fiery winds of fanaticism.

Now fanaticism is often based on an emotional type of religion that emphasizes feelings above God's Word. To a generation that often is extremely superficial in its understanding of the Word, to a generation of Adventists of adults and youth who want an instant form of religion, who are locked in Laodiceanism, the devil will palm-off a feel-good, emotional form of religion with signs and wonders within the Adventist church that sweeps people off their feet with an emotional response to religion. Now signs and wonders will become the essence of faith for some. Miracles will become the sum of their religious experience and the sign of God's favor. The devil is going to use signs, wonders, and miracles in a powerful way.

Although miracles are going to be wrought in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter reign, miracles never establish truth - they only confirm what God has already revealed. So, when one substitutes miracles...Now, somebody says sure, the Bible says...Now notice in an interesting passage, Revelation, Chapter 16, what will lead the world to accept the final union of church and state. Revelation the 16th chapter. And we're looking at Revelation 16:14 and onward. It says, "They are the spirits of devils or demons working miracles that go out to the kings of the earth and to the battle of the great day of God Almighty." At a time of economic disaster, at a time of political instability, at a time of natural disaster, church and state unite based on Revelation's prophesies. And as they do, the devil rises to work miracles for a generation that has cast off the restraints of God's Word. So, it is written, "None that have fought, except those who have fortified their minds with the teachings of scripture will stand in the last great crisis."

Now I always used to think and preach that the charismatic emotional movements of miracles would sweep evangelical Christianity off its feet but leave Adventists untouched. Until I read a very troubling statement in *Second Selected Messages*, page 53. This statement bears reading and a lot of contemplation. "Wonderful scenes with which Satan will be closely connected will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed." Now this next sentence is a troubling one. "These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test." "These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test."

Could it be that we are schooling a generation of Adventists who are shallow, superficial students of the Word, but who, in their hearts, are looking for something more? The devil will come along with a feel-good religion, leading them to accept a mystical Christ without the substance of the Word of God. And as a result of that, in the context of this misunderstanding of the revelation of scripture and who Christ is, accepting this mystical Christ, this Christ of no substance without the Word, could it be that the devil then will begin to work emotional feelings ... Dare I say it? Dare I not say it?...through high-powered music that plays upon the human emotions in a superficial religious experience? And could it be in that context that he will begin to work miracles? And that scores of Adventists, who are not anchored and grounded in the Word will be caught up in a false religious movement?

If we have any responsibility as leadership, it is to anchor our people in the Word of God. If we have any responsibility, it is to lead our people to the depth of understanding of the Word so their minds are filled with the living Word. Fanaticism begins with the substitution of human opinion and human feelings for the Word, adrift from studying God's Word, an emphasis on experience over truth.

Notice, again, here's *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1893. "When the enemy sees the Lord is blessing His people ..." Is the Lord blessing His people today? I praise God for the genuine revivals that are taking place. I praise God for programs and initiatives like *Believe His Prophets*. I praise God for the tens of thousands of millions of Adventists who are studying the Word. I do not mean in any way to paint a negative picture of the church. This church is the bride of Christ. There are millions of faithful Adventists who are studying the Word and saturating their minds with the Word. My concern this morning, through the eyes of prophecy, is the large numbers of our members who have superficial experiences with God, and the responsibility that we have to anchor them in the Word to stand the crisis that's coming.

Listen, when the enemy sees that the Lord's blessing His people, preparing them to discern the devil's illusions, he will work power. See, when the enemy sees that the Lord's blessing His people and preparing them to discern his delusions, we are His leaders, he, the devil, will work with his masterly power to bring in fanaticism on the one hand and cold formalism on the other. And he may gather in a harvest of souls. Now, is the time to watch unceasingly.

"Watch for the first step of advance that Satan may make among us." Now, that's another interesting statement. "Watch for the first step of advance." Eyes divinely opened. We look for the dust storms of doubt, and we respond with certainty. We look for the pestilent-laden breezes of heresy, and we respond with certainty. We look for the fiery winds of fanaticism, and we respond with certainty. But there is another wind that is blowing. The icy winds of formalism.

Take your Bible and turn to 2 Timothy 3, the icy winds of formalism, Second Timothy. We're looking there at Chapter 3. And here in 2 Timothy 3:5, we read, "Having a form of godliness, but denying its power." Paul speaking to Timothy talks about this form of godliness, truth as it is in Jesus is not cold, lifeless, and formal. Truth is full of warmth and the evidence of the presence of Jesus. Ellen White says in Volume 5538, "Where is the fervor? The devotion to God that corresponds to the greatness of the truth, which we claim to believe, a formal round of religious services kept up, but where is the love of Jesus?" She talks about the fact that when we come to Christ, there's a transformation of our life. Cold formalism often leads to criticism, intolerance, bigotry, and the lack of acceptance.

This little church that we are working in now that we raised up, when we started the church, we had 30 people coming. Now, we have 110 to 120 members and an attendance of over 200. And we said to our people, there are three maxims that we want to follow here. Number one, there are no standards whatever for attendance of the Adventist Church, absolutely no standards for attendance.

Anybody can walk through that door, jewelry, burping out alcohol, cigarettes in their pocket, we have no standards at all for attendance. We have biblical standards for membership, and we have higher standards for leadership. No standards for attendance at all.

Whoever you are, you come. We're going to hug you. We're going to get our arms around you. You pull into our parking lot and it's raining, we're going to be out there with umbrellas for you. You walk through those doors, whoever you are, we're not going to say, "Go to Sabbath School." We're going to say, "Hey, you got kids. Let us take you to Sabbath school and we'll sit with you if necessary." No standards at all for attendance, biblical standards for membership, higher standards for leadership.

We tell our people, "When people come into this church, and they leave on Sabbath morning, we want them to be filled with hope. You're not whipping our people from the pulpit." Anybody that gets up in the pulpit and whips our people, we're telling them, "That's the last time you ever spoke." Not the icy winds of formalism. Why is it that young people are often leaving the church? It is so cold and so formal, and they go there, and there is very little that happens. But when you go to a church and the Spirit of God is at work and some drunkard comes down the aisle and confesses his sin to Christ and he's changed; some marriage that is falling apart and that couple are now back together; some young person strung out on drugs comes over there and kneels at that altar crying his eyes out saying, "I'm coming to Jesus." When the Spirit comes down ...

I remember reading a cartoon once, and the cartoon was of a church. It was burning, and it was burning, and it was an old country church, and they had this bucket brigade and were passing buckets of water from one to the other, and you saw the pastor in his clerical robes, and he has this bucket of water and he's passing it to the next guy, and passing it to the next guy, and passing it to the next guy. Pretty soon, a backslider comes and stands next to the pastor. The preacher looks at the backslider and says, "I haven't seen you in church for a while." And the backslider says, "Yeah, Pastor. The church hasn't been on fire for a while."

The icy winds of formalism kill the spirit. Dust storms of doubt. The pestilent-laden breezes of heresy. The fiery winds of fanaticism. The icy cold winds of formalism. But probably the most dangerous wind of all is the gentle zephyr of Laodiceanism. Now, what is a zephyr? Maybe a new word for some. A zephyr is a quiet, warm breeze that makes you feel comfortable and puts you to sleep. That's a zephyr. The gentle zephyrs of Laodiceanism. I have come to the conclusion that of the messages of the seven churches, the message to the Laodicean church is the most encouraging. Let me show you one text and tell you why I believe that.

Revelation 3:14, the third chapter, one passage. The gentle zephyrs of Laodiceanism. We look at Revelation 3:14, "And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: 'These things say the Amen.'" Point one, there is no remnant that comes out of the remnant. When God says Amen, it's Amen. After Laodicea, there is no other church. So, all these people that are talking about the rise of another movement, talking about the apostacy that takes place in the church, they miss one word. After Laodicea, it says Amen. And when Jesus says Amen, it's Amen. There's not an eighth church, a ninth church, a tenth church. Very simple but very profound.

Revelation, Chapter 3, "And the angel of the church of Laodicea write: 'These things say the Amen.'" The faithful and true witness. Jesus is the One who has faithfully witnessed the character of God. He is the One who has truly revealed what God is like. And if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. He takes a woman caught in adultery and He forgives her. He takes a man shaking with the palsy, and He delivers him. He takes children in His arms. Who is the Christ of Laodicea? He is the faithful and true Witness that reveals to Laodicea in their smug complacency what the love of God is really like. And seeing that love, our hearts are broken and we are drawn to Him. Who is this Jesus of Revelation of Laodicea? He is the Amen. The One who doesn't have another church. The One who holds the bride of Christ in His hands. Who is this Jesus of Laodicea? He is the faithful and true witness of the Father's love who'll bring revival to His church. Who is this Christ of Laodicea? He is the beginning of the creation of God. The word beginning there is *arche*. It's not that He was the first of God's creation, but rather, He is the Beginner of the creation of God. He is the all-powerful Creator. He is the One who spoke and worlds came into existence. He is the One who spoke and hung the stars in space. God's Word is the creative Word. What God says is so, even if it were never so before because when God says it, it becomes so. The creative Word that comes out of God's mouth creates that which He declares. Who is the Christ of the Laodicea message? He is the all-powerful Creator. He created the world once, and He can recreate His church in His image. Praise God.

He can take Laodicean complacent hearts and can change them so that they burn for the love Of Him. Who is this Christ? He is the Creator who can blow away the dust storms of doubt. Who is this Jesus? He is the Jesus with the Gospel to inoculate us against the pestilent-laden breezes of heresy. Who is this Jesus? He is the Christ who can cool off the fiery winds of fanaticism and heat up the icy winds of formalism. Who is this Jesus? He is the Christ who meets the needs of His church, although deceptions and falsehoods will come as they did in the early church. We are secure in Christ. We are kept by His Spirit through His Word with Jesus's love filling our hearts, His Word saturating our minds. We need not fear because we are safe from the deceptive teachings of the evil one. Christ alone revealed in His Word. Christ alone is our refuge in every wind of doctrine.

When the gale-force winds of deception are blowing, there is refuge in One, and that's Jesus. I love that old verse. "From every stormy wind that blows, from every swelling tide of woes, there is a calm and true retreat beneath the Mercy Seat."

Where is our confidence as we face the climatic shaking hours of earth's history? It is not in ourselves. It is in Jesus. Where is our confidence? It is not in our wisdom. It is in His Word. Where is our confidence? It is not in some spectacular revelation of new truth. It is in rediscovering the beauty of the truths He's given us. Where is our confidence? It is not in some new so-called remnant that will arise out of the remnant. It is in the living Christ who has the church in His hands and will bring revival. Where is our confidence? Our confidence is in this: in spite of whatever winds blow on the church, Christ has it in His hands. Where is our confidence? It is in this, that He who promised to come will come.

We are Seventh-day Adventists and the Adventist message burns in our hearts. We've got this hope, this hope, that the morning will come. It was five years ago that I began to sense that I had a fairly serious health challenge. When that health challenge came, my wife and I decided

we would do three things. First, that we would pray earnestly and seek God. Five years ago, there was a period of time that I wondered if I'd live for one or two years based on some prognoses that were taking place. Thank God that that prognosis was not accurate. But I wondered about that. You have all these kinds of doubts that come in your mind, and we decided first, we're going to pray.

Second, we're going to use every bit of science we know, use the best scientific knowledge. I thank God for people like Dr. Landless who gave me such good counsel then, and he continues to do it now. And then we were going to do everything we could naturally. I knew that I had been pushing it too hard. I knew I needed rest. So Teenie and I decided to go to a little health center to get away from it all. I needed about three weeks. We would walk the trails. We would rest, try to get the best diet we could. I just needed refreshing. When I got there, the Loma Linda educated physicians, and I thank God for them, said to me, "If you have what it is purported that you may have, we can't cure that. But what we can do is help you to build your immune system. That's what we're going to work on with you. So, we worked to build my immune system.

Across from my room during those three weeks, there was another man. He had advanced stages of a particular cancer and he was dying. Each day I would go over and sit on his bed and talk to him. We'd talk about life. We'd talk about faith. We'd talk about the coming of Jesus. I tried to give him hope. One day, the room was empty. I felt badly. I hadn't seen him in two days. In my mind, I thought, "He's dead." A few days later, he came back. His physicians told me that he was so weak, they thought he was going to die. They brought him into the hospital, but they kind of revived him, and he came back.

I went over and sat on his bed. And I had just listened to a song, *Then Came the Morning*. He was facing a shaking, the shaking of his faith. He was facing a dark valley. He was facing death itself. And we sat together, and with tears running down his face, we listened to the song, *Then Came the Morning*. And a sparkle came in his eyes and a smile because he knew that in spite of what he was going through, that morning was coming.

Grasp the reality of that hope. You may be thinking today, "Pastor Mark, I don't have to worry about some time of trouble in the future because I'm going through a time of trouble in my home right now. I'm going through a time of trouble with my family right now. I'm going through a time of trouble with my health right now." Then came the morning. Look up. Jesus not only has the church in His hands. Jesus has you in His hands. Whatever this church is going to go through, whatever you're going to go through, the morning is coming. Death will lose. Life will win. Grasp the reality of the hope: Jesus wins. Satan loses. Amen.

Let's stand together. Adventism, the Seventh-day Adventist church, the Adventist movement is the most hopeful movement in the world because we have the absolute certainty that although there will be troublous times ahead, although there will be days that our times are dark, we are not Pollyannas with our heads in the sand. We read through the eyes of the prophetic word. There will be challenges, but thank God, Jesus wins and Satan loses. Thank God that Christ and His church and His people will triumph at last. For then came the morning.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, deep within our hearts, we long for the return of our Lord. The winds are blowing all around us. The dust storms of doubt are sweeping some. Pestilence-laden breezes of heresy are infecting others. The fiery winds of fanaticism and the cold winds of formalism, the gentle zephyrs of Laodiceanism, but beyond it all, Christ has this church in His hands. Beyond it all, the all-powerful Creator is recreating hearts. Beyond it all, there's a mighty revival that's sweeping through this church. Beyond it all, Your people are amazed by Your grace and charmed by Your love. Beyond it all, there's a movement that's impacting the world with the life of the glory of the gospel of Christ.

Oh, Jesus, send us from this place and this Spring Council with a deeper passion in our hearts to lead our people into deep spirituality with a passion for the Word and a passion for mission. We pray it in Christ's name. Amen.