

“CALLED TO BE FAITHFUL---COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND FAITH OF JESUS”
2024 Annual Council Sermon-4

Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:10

(Other Related Texts: Revelation 2:25; 3:3; 3:11; 12:17; 14:6-12; 19:10; Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 119:90; Matthew 24:45; I Thessalonians 5:24; Hebrews 10:23-25)

Hymn: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”---#100

October 12, 2024

Silver Spring, Maryland

Ted N C Wilson

Script Word Count and other activities: 4038 word count for sermon---35 min; Giorgia Maghelli's testimony---22 min; two prayers---7 min; singing of “We Have this Hope”—2 min; (Total time from sermon to end of service: 66 minutes which includes the scheduled time for the sermon, closing song, and closing prayer).

[Slide #1] Good morning, brothers and sisters, here in Silver Spring for our 2024 Annual Council and all of you around the globe through live-streaming. We are a precious Seventh-day Adventist family growing rapidly with now over 23 million believers to the glory of God and through His power. It is obvious to most people that we are living in unprecedented times with the world falling apart physically, socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. This globe is in disarray. As we hurtle towards the end of the world and Jesus' soon second coming, **[Slide #2]** God is calling us as His Advent movement to be faithful to Him and His Word especially as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of our first, official missionary, John Nevins Andrews and his family, who arrived in Switzerland in September 1874. We are all called to follow faithfully in this amazing example of selfless mission service wherever we are around this globe.

[Slide #3] Jesus implores us in Revelation 2:10, “.....Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” God is calling us today more than ever before in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be faithful to Him and His last-day message. There are pressures on every side to sidetrack us from our faithfulness, but God wants us to focus completely on Him and His Word.

[Slide #4] Revelation 12:17 identifies God's last-day people as those “....who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” **[Slide #5]** As Revelation 19:10 tells us, “.....the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” What a privilege to have received instruction, counsel, and inspiration from God working through Ellen G White as a part of the Spirit of Prophecy. Stand faithful to God's Holy Word and to His instructions in the writings of Ellen White as the Spirit of Prophecy.

As part of the powerful three angels' messages found in Revelation 14:6-12 entrusted to Seventh-day Adventists to proclaim until Christ's coming, we hear the call to be faithful reinforced in **[Slide #6]** Revelation 14:12 again identifying God's people: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

[Slide #7] This profound truth of faithfulness to God, His Word, and His commandments is beautifully reflected in Deuteronomy 7:9, “Therefore know that the Lord your god, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

In that marvelous book, *The Great Controversy*, our missionary book of the year for 2023, 2024, and 2025, **[Slide #8]** we read in Chapter 25, “God’s Law Immutable,” on page 450, “In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes---those who keep the commandments of God the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark. Although church and state will unite their power to compel ‘all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond’ (Revelation 13:16), to receive ‘the mark of the beast,’ yet the people of God will not receive it.

[Slide #9] The prophet of Patmos beholds ‘them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God’ and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Revelation 15:2, 3.”

Last Annual Council in 2023, we focused on being “Chosen for Mission.” In this mission God has called Seventh-day Adventists to accomplish through His power, we are to exhibit faithfulness so at this Annual Council we are focusing on “Called to be Faithful.” We have asked ten dedicated lay members of this General Conference Executive Committee to share their faithfulness to God through the morning devotionals. They will share their perspectives on God’s ten commandments and faithfulness to our Lord and His Word through complete reliance on the righteousness of Christ.....it is Christ who is the center of all our faithfulness to His Word, His ten commandments, and His three angels’ messages.....It is His righteousness that is at the core of all that can be accomplished through Him.

As never before, God is calling us to be faithful to Him. In this contemporary world of ever-changing values and slippery moral slopes, we are to stand firmly on solid ground with our feet planted on the sure Word of God.

[Slide #10] Ellen White indicated in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 26, 1912, that “At times we shall be in great perplexity, and not know just what to do. But at such times it is our privilege to take our Bibles, and read the messages He has given us; and then get down on our knees, and ask Him to help us. Over and over again, He has given evidence that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. He fulfills His promises in far greater measure than we expect to receive help.”

As God’s last-day people called to be faithful in believing and proclaiming His Word, let us be dynamic, faithful people of prayer depending only on the merits and power of Jesus Christ. **[Slide #11]** *Gospel Workers*, page 259, says, “The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the results of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power.”

Through our faithfulness to God and His power in the “audience chamber with God,” we can valiantly defend His commandments and proclaim our 28 Fundamental Beliefs. These biblical beliefs have Christ at the center of each of them and show us the way of Christ’s righteousness.....His justifying and sanctifying righteousness. He is the foundation of His ten commandments and the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Let’s simply name those 28 Fundamental Beliefs, without comment, to refresh our commitment to these wonderful, Christ-centered biblical truths. **[Slide #12]** They are:

1. The Holy Scriptures
2. The Trinity
3. The Father
4. The Son
5. The Holy Spirit
6. Creation
7. The Nature of Humanity
8. **[Slide #13]** The Great Controversy
9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
10. The Experience of Salvation
11. Growing in Christ
12. The Church
13. The Remnant and Its Mission
14. Unity in the Body of Christ
15. **[Slide #14]** Baptism
16. The Lord's Supper
17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
18. The Gift of Prophecy
19. The Law of God
20. The Sabbath
21. Stewardship
22. **[Slide #15]** Christian Behavior
23. Marriage and the Family
24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary
25. The Second Coming of Christ
26. Death and Resurrection
27. The Millennium and the End of Sin
28. The New Earth

We are called to be faithful to God's Word and His truth relying completely on the righteousness and power of Christ. **[Slide #16]** Welfare Ministry, page 265, admonishes us: "Too often the worker for Christ fails to realize his personal responsibility. He is in danger of shifting his burden upon organizations, instead of relying upon Him who is the source of all strength. It is a great mistake to trust in human wisdom or numbers in the work of God. Successful work for Christ depends not so much on numbers or talent as upon pureness of purpose, the true simplicity of earnest, dependent faith." Let us live faithful Christian lives allowing the righteousness of Christ to work in us to show a lifestyle full of godliness and mission outreach. Through His righteousness, we can show a lifestyle of biblical standards, health reform, righteousness by faith in Him, faithfulness to His Word in all things, and simplicity of action and behavior. We don't have to compete with the world in what we wear.....we can dress simply.....no need to wear jewelry and adornment.....we can live in simplicity recognizing that we are in the investigative judgement as the Day of Atonement showing our simplicity in pointing people to God and giving Him all the glory and not attracting attention to ourselves.....There is no need to compete with the world in music and entertainment for young people and others.....we are to share uplifting and simple music and worship to the almighty God who is faithful to His people as they are faithful to Him just as Revelation 4 indicates.

We are to faithfully hold onto God's Word, His intended mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the fact that we are a peculiar people called to be faithful.....a unique people with a unique message

on a unique mission. **[Slide #17]** Christ, speaking in His book of Revelation asks us in 2:25, “But hold fast what you have till I come.” **[Slide #18]** In 3:3, He says “...hold fast and repent.” **[Slide #19]** In 3:11, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” Christ wants us to be faithful to Him, His Word, and His commandments.

[Slide #20] The apostle Paul, writing in Hebrews 10:23-25 says, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Let us be faithful in sharing God’s Word and in living His Word. Let us be faithful in meeting together physically in our churches worldwide as we take the last warning message to the world.

I Thessalonians 5:24 reminds us of God’s faithfulness in rewarding our faithfulness to Him, “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” We are called to be faithful just as God is faithful to us. Jude admonishes us in verse three, “.....to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” There are a host of biblical heroes who were faithful and God is calling on us to be faithful as they were. People like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Jochebed, Moses, Esther, Elijah, Hannah, Samuel, David, Abigail, Peter, Paul, Dorcas, John, and so many more.

In this unusual time in earth’s history, we are called to be faithful to the Word of God. **[Slide #21]** Spiritual Gifts, Book III, page 94 states, “God has given sufficient evidence upon which to base faith if he wish to believe. In the last days the earth will be almost destitute of true faith. Upon the merest pretense, the Word of God will be considered unreliable, while human reasoning will be received, though it be in opposition to plain Scripture facts.” My fellow leaders, we are living in those very days. The Word of God is being neglected, despised, and twisted to reflect human reasoning rather than what the Bible actually says. This is most notable in what God calls sin in its many forms including the biblical truth about human sexuality. We are called to be faithful to God and His Word.

Some years ago, I found a profound poem in my dear mother’s Bible. **[Slide #22]** My wonderful mother, Elinor Esther Neumann Wilson, was a woman of simple faith and adherence to God’s Word. She taught me much in practical as well as spiritual reliance on God. I treasure the spiritual upbringing my father and mother provided for me. My fellow leaders, pay careful and special attention to the families of the church worldwide and to our own families. Let us give support to all those lifting up faithfulness to God especially those working in Family Ministries. The influence of each of us as parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and other family connections is of inestimable value in pointing young people to the faithfulness to God and His Word.

The interesting poem I found in my mother’s Bible reads like this:

[Slide #23] “It is one thing to read the Bible through. Another thing to read to learn and do. Some read it with design to learn to read. But to the subject pay but little heed. Some read it as their duty once a week. But no instruction from the Bible seek; while others read it with but little care, with no regard to how they read, nor where. Some read it as a history, to know how people lived three thousand years ago. **[Slide #24]** Some read to bring themselves into repute, by showing others how they can dispute; while others read because their neighbors do, to see how long ‘twill take to read it through. Some read it for the wonders that are there,---how David killed a lion and a bear; while others read it with uncommon care, hoping to find some contradiction there! Some read as though it did not speak to them, but the people at Jerusalem. **[Slide #25]** One reads it as a book of mysteries, and won’t believe

the very thing he see. One reads with father's specs upon his head, and sees the thing just as his father said. Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed, hence understand but little that they read; for every passage in the book they bend, to make it suit that all-important end! **[Slide #26]** Some people read, as I have often thought, to teach the book instead of being taught, and some there are read it out of spite--I fear there are but few who read it right. So, many people in these latter days, have read the Bible in so many ways that few can tell which system is the best, for every party contradicts the rest! **[Slide #27]** But read it prayerfully, and you will see, although men contradict, God's words agree. For what the early Bible prophets wrote we find that Christ and His apostles quote: so trust no creed that trembles to recall what has been penned by one and verified by all."

Brothers and sisters, we head into the very last battle against Satan and sin. God is calling us to be faithful to Him, His Word, to the Advent message.....and to the proclamation of the three angels' messages which focus on Christ's righteousness and His beautiful ten commandments showing that His character is based on His everlasting love for each of us. This love shows the centrality of Christ in our lives and His complete role in our salvation. We are to be part of Global Total Member Involvement to reach the world saying to the Lord, "I Will Go." We are so grateful to the world divisions and attached fields for their engagement in Global TMI.....working together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for a great harvest. Let us feel our responsibility to be part of God's last, final loud cry. Everyone has a place in God's work. **[Slide #28]** We have often repeated the quotation from Testimonies for the Church, Vol 9, page 117, which says, "The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those ministers and church officers." All of us as Seventh-day Adventists, here and around this globe, are called to be faithful in our proclamation of God's last-day message and participate in His mission for His remnant church. **[Slide #29]** In Testimonies to Southern Africa, pages 43-44, we read, "Would that we might feel the importance of educating every individual member of the church to do something. We should individually sense the solemn obligation of Christians to bring into activity all their divinely entrusted resources and capabilities, to do to the utmost of their power the work the Lord expects them to do.....We need more faith, more sanctified ability. **[Slide #30]** High and ennobling motives are before us. We have no time, no words to spend in controversy.....There is need of sanctified energy. The armies of heaven are on the move, and where is the human agent to cooperate with God?"

God is calling us to be faithful.....He calls us to be faithful in responding to His powerful truth in the Holy Bible.....to be faithful in living a life in accordance with His instructions.....to be faithful in proclaiming His Word with Holy Spirit power. The personal stories and witness of each of us are to be shared with the world as we faithfully testify of Jesus and His saving power.

Recently, I heard a personal testimony of God's faithfulness and in turn, the faithfulness to the Word of God by one who had been in the middle of worldly pursuits but was called by God to be faithful. At a recent Loma Linda University Health Board retreat, we were thrilled with the spiritual testimony of Giorgia Maghelli, a junior medical student at Loma Linda University Health, regarding God's faithfulness in her life. There were many involved in allowing God to work through them to touch Giorgia's life including Pastor and Mrs Mark Finley and Dr Andi Hunsaker, one of our GC Executive Committee members.....they are here on the platform to support and encourage Giorgia as she shares this amazing testimony of God's faithfulness and Giorgia's faithfulness to God as she represents today's missionaries 150 years after the first official Adventist missionary, John Nevins Andrews. She will join many medical missionaries preparing people for Jesus' soon coming.

Giorgia, we are privileged to have you come to the pulpit and through the power of God tell us your story of faithfulness.

(Testimony by Giorgia---22 minutes)

What a thrilling story of God's faithfulness and Giorgia's faithfulness to the Word of God. Pastor Finley, please come and pray for Giorgia and all the many people coming into God's Advent movement through Global TMI and our initiative, "I Will Go."

(Prayer by Mark Finley---4 minutes)

Yes, brothers and sisters, God is faithful and He wants us to be faithful. Lamentations 3:23 assures us, ".....Great is Your faithfulness" and in Psalm 119:90, "Your faithfulness endures to all generations....." Yes, His faithfulness is seen today in our generation and He is calling us to be faithful to Him and His task for us. As we lean on Him, He will empower us to be faithful to Him because He is our all in all.....He will supply all that is needed to accomplish the final task of warning the world and bringing the hope of salvation to those longing for eternal values. Being faithful to His ten commandments through His power is not legalism but a highlighting of His righteousness.....justifying and sanctifying righteousness since Jesus Christ is our sufficiency. I received a beautiful account of Christ's sufficiency that came to me in English and Russian. Let me share this assurance of God's faithfulness to us as we are faithful to Him through His power:

[Slide #31] If you are hungry, He is The Bread of Life.

If you are thirsty, He is The Water of Life.

If you are lost, He is The Way.

If you are on the outside, He is The Door.

[Slide #32] If you are searching, He is The Truth.

If you are sick, He is The Great Physician.

If you need care, He is The Good Shepherd.

If you are troubled, He is The Comforter.

[Slide #33] If you are in darkness, He is The Light.

If you are in a battle, He is the Lord of Hosts.

If you need guidance, He is The Bright and Morning Star.

If you admit your sins, He is the Lord Our Righteousness.

[Slide #34] If you are dead, He is The Resurrection and The Life.

He is The Rose of Sharon,

The Lily of the Valley.

He is The Saviour.

He is God.

He is our All Sufficient.

God has provided all that is needed for our salvation and all that is needed for us to be faithful in proclaiming His last-day message of hope, warning, and redemption. Are you willing to be part of Global TMI in sharing God's message to the world? Are you willing to answer Christ's plea to us in **[Slide #35]** Matthew 24:45 when He said, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" **[Slide #36]** Are you and I willing to be faithful so the Savior's words in the next verse, verse 46, come true in these end times? "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."

[Slide #37] In Selected Messages, Book Two, page 397, Ellen White indicted, "I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time."

Here we are today from all over the world.....we asked you, if you wished, to wear a national costume today representing God's worldwide family. Nancy and I are wearing clothing representing our dear church members in South Sudan. **[Slide #38]** In fact, this galabya is the one I used to baptize precious new Seventh-day Adventist believers in the Nile River this last July during our evangelistic meetings there. We are all the modern-day missionaries to go to the world as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of our first missionary. God has asked us to be perfectly united in His Spirit to the end of time as we witness for Him. Today, are you willing to thank God for His faithfulness? Are you willing to be faithful to Him, His Word, and His message to be given to the world? If so, would you stand with me in total commitment to our all-sufficient, powerful, faithful God.

Look around at this marvelous group of world church leaders dressed to represent God's faithful worldwide, international family proclaiming God's precious truth in the greatest tribute, not only to the 150th anniversary of world mission activity, but in faithful fulfillment of God's commission to His precious remnant church to proclaim the three angels' messages. God has called us to be faithful in this sacred task as we approach Christ's return.

As faithful stewards of God's kingdom, He will reward us here on this earth with His blessings and in the near future with His soon second coming. **[Slide #39]** Soon, we will look up in the eastern sky and see a small white cloud approaching about half the size of a man's hand. That cloud will get brighter and brighter and larger and larger, all of heaven poured out for this climactic event.....and in the middle of that cloud, we will see Jesus. We will say, "this is the God that we have waited for and He will save us." Jesus will look down and say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord".....and we will ascend to heaven together. I long for that day when we see Jesus who is faithful. If you long to be faithful to Him, would you join hands with the person next to you connecting our international group one to another in this marvelous opportunity to be unified in Christ, called to be faithful by Christ, and empowered to faithfully proclaim His last-day message that Christ is Our Hope.....to seal this commitment, let's sing together the first stanza of our international Seventh-day Adventist song, "We Have this Hope."

(Congregation sings "We Have this Hope"---One stanza---2 minutes---Magdiel will arrange for piano and organ to play during this song)

(Prayer by Ted---3 minutes)

"You are chosen for mission and called to be faithful.....move ahead and say, 'Yes, Lord, I will go'.....may God bless each of you as you are faithful to Him....Maranatha!"