

Ted Wilson Elected President at Atlanta GC Session 2010

WILSON'S ELECTION / OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS / HIS ENTIRE SERMON

WILSON'S BACKGROUND

Theodore (Ted) N.C. Wilson was born in 1950, when his father, Neal C. Wilson was 30. Ted grew up in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt where his father, Neal C. Wilson, was at that time head of the Near Eastern Division.

(Regarding Ted's father, Neal C. Wilson: He was president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1979 to 1990, received his elementary and secondary education, plus two years of college, in Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, and India—countries where his father before him had served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in pastoral and administrative posts. In Zambia, his mother was treasurer for a number of years. An alumnus of Pacific Union College in Angwin, Neal C. Wilson is now 90 years old.)

Ted holds a master of divinity degree from Andrews University, a master of science degree in public health from Loma Linda University School of Public Health, and a doctor of philosophy degree in religious education from New York University.

He is married to Nancy Louise Vollmer Wilson, a physical therapist; and the couple has three daughters: Emilie Louise married to Pastor Kameron DeVasher, Elizabeth Esther married to Pastor David Wright, and Catherine Anne married to Dr. Bob Renck.

EARLIER CHURCH POSITIONS

Ted began his church career as a pastor in 1974 in the church's Greater New York Conference.

From 1976 to 1981, he served as an assistant director and then director of Metropolitan Ministries in that conference, which includes all of Greater New York City.

From 1981 to 1990, he was the first departmental director and then as executive secretary (the second highest officer) of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

From 1990 to 1992, he was associate secretary of the General Conference at the church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Then, from 1992-1996, he was president of the Euro-Asia Division in Moscow, Russia,

Wilson then came back to the United States; and, from 1996 to 2000, he was president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Maryland.

In 2000, he was elected as a General Conference vice president at the General Conference Session in Toronto.

It is obvious, from the above, that Ted Wilson has held a wide variety of important church positions on several continents. His 36 years of denominational service have included administrative and executive positions in the Mid-Atlantic United States, Africa, Russia, and at the Review and Herald and the General Conference.

ALMOST ELECTED IN 2005

In 2005, Wilson was almost elected President of the General Conference, but a slight majority of the nominating committee decided to retain Jan Paulsen in office.

I heard at the time that the conservatives in the church were keenly disappointed. They had believed that Ted would provide a stabilizing influence which would help bring the church to its historic positions and values,—at least, he would try hard to interrupt the downward slide.

Jan Paulsen, on the other hand, has had a reputation for trying to please everyone, including the liberals; and worldly plans, activities, and contacts have steadily increased during his presidency. It is not that he encouraged it, but he did nothing to stop it.

DECIDED OPPOSITION IN 2010

Ted N.C. Wilson was elected as a general vice president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church in July 2000, during the General Conference Session in Toronto.

2 The Atlanta General Conference Session, which was in session from Thursday, June 24, through Sabbath, July 3, was expected to draw 70,000 people (delegates and visitors).

Everyone eagerly looked forward to the election of a new president, to replace aging Jan Paulsen. The conservatives in the church hoped it would be Ted Wilson, while the liberals did everything they could to stop it. In the weeks prior to that Friday election, I found internet discussions about the importance of pushing through a strong campaign to keep Ted Wilson from being elected.

However, as determined as was the opposition, we are thankful that there was a larger number who wanted Wilson elected to the GC presidency. They recognized the crucial need for a change.

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Historically, the first person to be selected by the nominating committee is the president of the General Conference. This always happens on the first Friday in the Session.

This nominating committee is very important; and, over the following week, it gradually nominates one person after another for many important positions. Whoever the committee decides to elect (or retain) as president is afterward very influential in helping lean the committee toward individuals he wants placed in office.

On Friday, June 25, the nominating committee met at its first meeting to elect the president for the forthcoming five years. This year, there was 246 members on that committee.

Someone who was present told me afterward that, on the first ballot, 140 out of 242 on the committee (apparently four members were not present)—voted for Ted Wilson. The other person who had been nominated only got 40 votes.

This is unprecedented! First, Ted was elected on the first ballot; and, second, he was elected by an extremely large majority on that first ballot.

Once a person is nominated to any office, the next step is for his name to be read from the podium in the large auditorium—so he can be approved or rejected by the entire delegation. That delegation is an international body of 2,410 appointed members; and, for a few days, they are the highest governing body in the church.

(Notice that those delegates were “appointed,” not elected. Some delegates (about 35%) represent the General Conference itself. Others consist of leaders of divisions, unions, conferences, publishing houses, etc. A smaller number are se-

lected by those leaders. About 9% are laymen.)

Very, very significantly—there were primarily only three groups of delegates in the world field which did not want Ted Wilson to be elected: a number of leaders in the North American Division and those from Australia, New Zealand, and many parts of Western Europe. —The most liberal leaders and workers from the entire world field opposed Wilson’s election to the end!

When later asked, many delegates on the floor of the Georgia Dome said Wilson’s election demonstrated the church’s confidence in his forthcoming leadership. But delegates from the three areas, mentioned above, were not so sure.

“I think the church, from his sermons, is going to go back to the basics; but I hope it’s not going back to the basics of a legalistic approach to things,” said delegate Shirley Chang of California, one of three lay people from North America on the General Conference Executive Committee, which has more than 300 members.

(All members of the very large GC Executive Committee meet together at Annual Council, usually held in October. Some attend the Spring Council. Between those two council gatherings, a few men at General Conference headquarters meet to conduct the affairs of the church.)

So it was that, on Friday, June 25, Ted N.C. Wilson, 60 years old, a vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and the son of a former church president (Neal C. Wilson, president from 1979 to 1990) was elected president of the 16.3 million Seventh-day Adventist Church, during the denomination’s 59th General Conference Session in Atlanta. The Seventh-day Adventist Church circles the globe, stretching from Asia to the Americas, from Africa to the South Pacific. It operates the largest Protestant network of schools and hospitals worldwide.

Ted Wilson replaced Jan Paulsen, who has served as president since 1999. The appointment had taken place at the church’s 59th General Conference Session, held at the Georgia Dome and adjacent World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIONS

Many other matters were discussed. As usual, those on the preplanned agenda were approved. But some were rejected.

THE CREATION AMENDMENT

You will recall that, in a recent three-part report (*La Sierra Evolution Crisis Intensifies [WM-1556-1558]*), we discussed the growing number of conservatives who wanted to push through a

“*Creation Amendment*” to our official Statement of Beliefs, at the forthcoming Atlanta Session.

At the 2010 Session, it was brought to the floor, discussed—and approved by the assembly of delegates as a replacement for the previous paragraph on that subject.

(In that earlier 12-page report, I explained how several key liberals—at that time on the Bible staff at Andrews University—watered down all our doctrinal beliefs in late 1979 and early 1980, and then got them enacted as our new 27-point Statement of Belief at the Dallas General Conference Session.)

But, in addition, several other significant discussions and decisions were made:

CHURCH MANUAL REVISIONS

In addition to selecting and electing a president for the next five years, which was considered by many to be the single most important accomplishment of the Session, delegates spent many hours revising the 78-year-old *Church Manual*.

Most of the 95 revisions were said to be rather minor editing changes (we hope). But some of the proposals proved controversial because they delved indirectly into topics that were not officially on the agenda (such as the church’s position against women’s ordination) which certain delegates wanted addressed. (Those, of course, were the delegates opposed to Ted Wilson’s nomination.)

THE ORDINATION OF DEACONESES

For years, a running battle has been fought in the church as to whether or not to ordain women as ministers. Executives at the headquarters of the North American Division, as well as the Southeastern California Conference, have led out in this demand. But a number of others, including the Potomac Conference leadership, have sided with them.

Finally, the crisis came to a head at the 1995 Utrecht Session. The chairman at the podium told the delegates to “vote their conscience.” That was code for “vote whichever way you want.” They did not have to follow orders given them by their leaders.

With the usual exception of North America, South Pacific (Australia and New Zealand), and parts of Western Europe—the delegates from the other sections of the entire world field rejected women’s ordination as not Biblical.

The matter was not discussed at the 2000 Session at Toronto or the 2005 Session at St. Louis. But, in 2010, it was subtly brought in

again. The controversy this time centered around whether deaconesses could be ordained. The liberals hoped that approval would provide a backdoor for the entrance of women as ministers.

The committee (with liberals on it) that spent years studying the *Church Manual* had proposed to allow each of the 13 world regions to decide individually whether deaconesses could be ordained, thus potentially putting them on equal footing with deacons, their male counterparts. That is the same way the world church has handled the role of women pastors: The leadership in each region can decide whether they can be “commissioned.” That is another code word: It means they can perform all the functions of an ordained minister.

(Please understand my position: Women are generally more spiritual than men and often have to lead out in home worship, as well as caring for the lower-level Sabbath School classes and other worthwhile functions. But the concept of women as the religious leaders over both men and women is not in the Bible. If it were, I would gladly accept it. From Adam to the Apostle John, they are never the religious leaders, although some have been prophets.)

Perhaps it wasn’t surprising, then, that the discussion on deaconesses turned into a polite debate about whether women should, or should not, be ordained as ministers. This prompted those chairing the meeting to urge delegates to stick to the topic at hand.

But the Session seemed to be a good place for delegates to address anew this controversial issue. Those leading out were advocates of women’s ordination from Europe, the Australia-based South Pacific region, and the United States who said they were disappointed the matter had been left off the agenda.

“We would like to hope that in the next Session there will be a motion for women’s ordination,” said Mariann Harbarth, a delegate from Germany.

“We would like to be able to move forward” on women’s ordination, said Barry Oliver, president of the South Pacific region. “The South Pacific Division is in a situation in which unity in the church is being impacted by our failure to move.”

Many delegates from Latin America and Africa, meanwhile, remained opposed. Some went as far as to say they opposed deaconesses being ordained; because that action could later open the door to pastoral ordination of women.

Ultimately, the delegates rejected the General

4 Conference recommendation to ordain deaconesses. Instead, a compromise was approved: a sweeping policy that makes deaconesses and deacons equal, in all parts of the world, even taking the decision out of the hands of regional leaders.

"I know a lot of us felt that, with that vote on the deaconesses, there was such a feeling that it passed with such a large margin," said Chang, the delegate from California, "that maybe it would have been time that women's ordination would have gone through, too."

The constant discussion about women's ordination and the continual push by delegates from certain world regions, for women to have greater leadership roles, prompted delegate Ray Hartwell, president of the Pennsylvania Conference, to call for a thorough study of ordination. As a result, the Session's Steering Committee, which oversees the daily agenda, agreed to order a comprehensive report on ordination within the next five years. Although the matter was explored in depth in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the action was taken at Atlanta for the church to conduct a thorough review of its biblical theology behind ordination.

MARRIAGE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Perhaps the most controversial of all topics involving the *Church Manual* was the issue of marriage, and how leaders sought to solidify the church's position, which previously has stated "Marriage, thus instituted by God, is a monogamous, heterosexual relationship."

The proposal to add the words "between one male and one female" to the definition of marriage was bothersome to a minority of delegates, especially one, from the Netherlands, who publicly stated that the strict definition alienates gays and lesbians.

His proposed amendment—"Marriage is a monogamous, loving relationship between two mutually consenting adults"—drew gasps from the delegates and prompted many of them to line up at the microphones to oppose the position. The proposed amendment failed by an overwhelming margin of votes.

In the end, delegates approved the original proposal to strengthen the church's position; but, again, the debate showed a stark contrast of opinions at a world conference of Adventists.

"I know that fellow [from the Netherlands] was speaking in line with the reality of what is hap-

pening today; so, yeah, one part of me says this probably isn't the right place," said Pastor John Leeman of the Island Republic of Vanuatu, east of Australia. "Another part of me sees there's a need there, there's something there, there's a bell ringing there."

Leeman said that hearing the comment from the European delegate with open-minded views about homosexuality is a wake-up call to church members: "If your uncle, if your auntie, if your brother is a gay, how would you deal with it? If they come to church, and sit together, and hold hands, what would you do? What would Jesus say?"

Church leaders did not seem to have answers for everything; but they paid close attention to the delegates' voices, even for matters that were not on the Session agenda.

Another matter that was discussed was the importance of finding a way for young adults to increase their presence on the church's decision-making bodies. Whether anything will come of that is not known.

NEW NAD PRESIDENT

On Monday, June 28, Dan Jackson was elected president of the North American Division. The 61-year-old Jackson, currently president of the Canadian Union, was a graduate of Canadian Union College (now Canadian University College) and Andrews University. Jackson has been a pastor, teacher, and administrator. With the exception of five years of service in the Southern Asia Division, he has lived and worked in Canada. Not much is known about him by most of us.

WILSON BEGAN HIS SERMON

On Sabbath morning, July 3, 2010, Ted Wilson gave a sermon to the assembled delegates and visitors in attendance at the Atlanta Session. He spoke in the mammoth stadium, called the Georgia Dome.

Addressing a crowd of 69,989 Seventh-day Adventists and friends, Ted N.C. Wilson, in his first Sabbath sermon as General Conference president, urged members to "go forward" in confidence through the days ahead.

Wilson's message—delivered as he was surrounded by the Church's 13 division presidents, nine general vice presidents, and his two immediate predecessors—came in a morning service where worshippers heard the fourth movement of Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5, the "Ref-

Ted Wilson Elected President at Atlanta GC Session 2010

**PART TWO
OF FOUR**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

ormation Symphony,” and where the world church leader read words of welcome from the United States President, Barack Obama.

He, as well as his audience, obviously knew that this would be a keynote address. It was likely to provide some indication of where Wilson stood, doctrinally, and where he wanted to take the church during the forthcoming five years.

Within a couple minutes into his sermon, *Wilson said something that startled me!*

“I appreciate the wonderful spirit and enthusiasm of our worldwide family of faith. And while we are all proud of our respective nations and cultures, I praise the Lord that there is a culture of Christ that binds us together and supersedes all others.

“In that spirit, I humbly ask for your prayers that the message I share today is heard clearly and that the messenger not be lifted up. To that end, if there is a particular point with which you agree, please respond with a heartfelt ‘Amen’ instead of applause. Thank you for your help in keeping the message, not the messenger, the center of our time together.”

Although not included in the written transcripts of his speech, which were afterward made available after saying the above, the audience became very quiet. But, a few minutes later, there was a slight bit of applause at something Wilson said. Then a couple more very brief applauses. And then a strong ovation of applause burst forth.

At this, Ted interrupted his message and once again asked the audience not to applaud. It is my understanding that, from that time forward throughout the remainder of his speech, no more applause was heard.

Let me briefly explain why I have such a depth of feeling about this:

A third-generation Adventist, I grew up in the church. Living in San Francisco, I attended every General Conference Session from early childhood in 1936 to 1954 (the last year it was held there).

In 1954, just prior to my senior year in college, I walked into the Session and went up into the balcony. Various events occurred. Then some sporadic applause began; and soon it swelled into much more.

As I watched, stunned, the leaders on the platform just stared at the audience. It was obvious

that they were shocked also at the applause—but not one of them dared say anything.

The applause in our denomination has steadily grown, until it has become standard.

I want you to know that my heart was broken as I witnessed that initial applause. Why did our leaders not have the courage to stop it?

So, when Ted twice required amens instead of applause, I rejoiced. That man must be a good, Bible/Spirit-of-Prophecy based Christian to do that!

Only the future can tell whether or not Wilson will be able to turn the church around; for there will be many obstacles confronting him. Yet there appears to be little doubt that he will try to do it.

A friend who has many acquaintances among our leaders told me, “Several high-ranking men have said, ‘Ted Wilson’s intention is to clean house.’” Many of us are praying that he will.

TED WILSON’S G.C. SERMON

As mentioned earlier, on the last Sabbath morning during the Session, Wilson gave an important sermon to a vast audience in the Georgia Dome, which indicated both his thinking and the direction in which he would like to lead the church.

Here are the several divisions of his presentation: After a brief introduction, there is a section with 30 slides of Bible and Spirit of Prophecy quotations. How refreshing to see a leader *frequently quote both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy from the pulpit!*

The second part of that slide section, is about Moses leading God’s people through the wilderness.

The next section of his sermon deals the theme, “*Go forward, not backward!*”

The final section consisted of an inspiring story about a young man, Vasili, in Moldova, who determined to remain true to God, regardless of the consequences.

That led into Ted’s appeal and close.

Here is his complete sermon. I have placed certain portions in bold for emphasis:

“GO FORWARD” - Ted Wilson, General Con-

6 **ference Sabbath Sermon, in the Georgia Dome [stadium]. July 3, 2010**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! What a privilege to worship together on this last Sabbath morning of the 59th General Conference session. We are grateful for the many ways the Lord has led His church during this week. **We give all the glory to Him.**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is on a heaven-directed journey; and we are almost home. **I believe with all my heart that Jesus is coming soon!** We say it in every language:

“Jesus revient bientôt!” (*French*), “Haysoos vee-en-nay (vien-a) pronto!” (*Spanish*), “Brehvee Jayzeus voltarah!” (*Portuguese*), “Isus prediot skora!” (*Russian*), “Yesu ana-kuja kari-buni sana!” (*Swahili*), “Yesu knee me Kgauld O shimknee-dah!” (*Korean*), “Yesu zhai-lie!” (*Chinese*), “Yesu jelldee eye-gah!” (*Hindi*), “Si Haysus eye ma-lahh-pit nang duma-ting!” (*Tagalog*), “Ha ana ahti seriahn!” (*Arabic*), “Yahsus kommt bahldt!” (*German*)—and in so many other languages of the world.

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

CHAOTIC WORLD; SOLID WORD

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

What a tremendous blessing to know that,

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

ADVENTIST IDENTITY AND MISSION

With the power of His truth, God has carved out of this chaotic world the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We are to be a peculiar people, God’s remnant people, to lift up Christ, His righteousness, His three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, and His soon coming. (FIRST SLIDE) As Bible believing Christians living in the last days of earth’s history, we are to be what the apostle Peter called **“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,** that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” [1 Peter 2:9]. As God’s remnant people are identified in Revelation 12:17 **(NEXT SLIDE)** as those **“who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,”** we have a unique message of hope and a mandate to proclaim God’s grace to the world. **(NEXT SLIDE)** In the seventh volume of the *Testimonies* we read, **“Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. . . He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation”** [7T 138].

[The entire quotation is, in a special sense, referring to the importance of our publishing work and the books it is supposed to send forth, as a special means by which the work will be finished. It is a special means of accomplishing that task: “Our publishing work was established by the direction of God and under His special supervision. It was designed to accomplish a specific purpose . . . The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world; and in the accomplishment of this work our publishing houses are among the most effective agencies.”—7 *Testimonies*, 138.]

SABBATH

One of the identifying characteristics of God’s last-day people is the fact that the members of His church accept and believe ALL

ten of God's commandments, including the fourth commandment which calls us to remember the Lord's holy Sabbath day. **The observance of the Sabbath is not only a sign of His creatorship in the beginning but will be THE sign of God's people in the last days** in contrast to those with the mark of the beast, representing an attempt to keep holy a day which God has not set apart as holy.

THE SABBATH AND THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

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

SALVATION

The third angel closes his proclamation, in verse 12, (**NEXT SLIDE**) by identifying God's people as those "who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." **We rely wholly on Jesus and our relationship with Him for our salvation.** We do not obtain salvation through works, but through the grace of Christ that we proclaim. Grace is the promise of God's pardon and the provision of God's power—justification and sanctification. **You cannot separate what Christ does FOR you (justifying you daily as if you had not sinned) from what He does IN you (sanctifying you daily as you submit to Him** and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to change your life to become more and

more like Jesus.) This is the everlasting Gospel spoken about in the first angel's message. It is righteousness by faith. This is why Seventh-day Adventists should be the most powerful voices in proclaiming God's grace! **The great controversy theme is all about God's grace to save sinners and, through His power, to transform them into His sons and daughters,** faithful witnesses proclaiming the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit zeal through a living connection with Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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

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

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Now, getting back to Revelation 12:17 (**NEXT SLIDE**) and **another great distinguishing mark of God's remnant people. We read that they will "have the testimony of Jesus Christ."** (**NEXT SLIDE**) Revelation 19:10 tells us that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." **The same spirit that moved the holy men of old has again, in these last days, raised up a messenger for the Lord.** My brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, **the Lord has given us one of the greatest gifts possible in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.** Just as the Bible is not outdated or irrelevant, neither is the testimony of God's end-time messenger. God used Ellen G. White as a humble servant to provide inspired insight about Scripture, prophecy, health, education, relationships, mission, families, and so many more topics. **Let us read the Spirit of Prophecy, follow the Spirit of Prophecy, and share the**

8 Spirit of Prophecy. There are so many wonderful books to share, including the one book Ellen White indicated she wished distributed more than any other—*The Great Controversy*. Thank the Lord for the religious freedom in this and other countries that allows us to share truth. **The Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of God’s last-day people** and is just as applicable today as ever before because it was given to us by heaven itself. As God’s faithful remnant, **may we never make of none effect the precious light given us in the writings of Ellen G. White.**

CHRIST-LIKE HUMILITY

When we use that term, remnant church or remnant people, we must never use it in a self-centered, exclusive manner. We are to be the humblest people on earth, recognizing our complete need of Jesus our Savior and praising Him for calling us into this mighty Advent movement. This Advent movement is made up of humble, simple people—not simplistic, but simple. Many of God’s people are educated, disciplined, and savvy, but yet we are to be a simple people. Our Savior spoke with astonishing authority yet was humble enough to be appealing to the worst of sinners. **This church is not just another denomination; it is a unique, heaven-initiated movement with a mission of salvation to the world** that must continually go forward in the humility of Jesus. **The world needs to hear the message of Christ from a people who are Christ-like.** When we are transformed by His grace, we will preach, teach, and witness to the straight message from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy in a humble, loving, winsome manner. When we, in all humility, lean completely on the everlasting arms of our Lord, He will work through us in a mighty way to give the final message of mercy to a dying world. **Our success in finishing this work depends on our submissiveness to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit.** It depends on humbling ourselves before our Creator and denying self, so that Jesus can control us and overcome our sin. It depends on whether or not we are ready to humbly ask for revival and reformation in our lives personally and corporately as a church, which will lead to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.

Mrs. White records a vision in *Testimonies Vol. 8*, entitled “What Might Have Been” [8T

103-106]. She saw that God wanted to do two great things at the General Conference Session in 1901: 1. Reorganize the church which happened, giving us much of the structure we have today; and 2. **Provide the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which did not happen because there was unbelief within the church, and God’s leaders and people did not humble themselves before God.** The church missed the opportunity of receiving the latter rain. It was one hundred nine years ago. **Let us not make God wait any longer** to begin the latter rain, so that Jesus can come.

We need to earnestly pray for that experience. We have been doing that during this session and must continue to earnestly seek the Lord’s will in our lives after we leave here. **(NEXT SLIDE)** Mrs. White makes clear that **“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work”** [1SM 121]. During the business sessions of this General Conference, you have been pleading for revival and reformation, for the Holy Spirit and the latter rain. **Brothers and sisters, it is time—the Lord is coming soon! He wants to use His remnant church in a most powerful way. The Lord is longing to reproduce in us His own character.** This can happen as we surrender ourselves to Him each day. As Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5, **(NEXT SLIDE)** “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” As we connect with Christ daily and allow Him to work through us, we will be used by the Holy Spirit to proclaim His grace and to hasten the coming of the Lord. Remember, this is the Advent movement, a called people, a remnant church, a people of destiny, a people on a journey toward heaven as we proclaim God’s grace.

In the book, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, we read of Christ’s wish for His people, **(NEXT SLIDE)** “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. **When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.** It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would

Ted Wilson Elected President at Atlanta GC Session 2010

**PART THREE
OF FOUR**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

come to gather the precious grain” [COL 69].

ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT

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

Exodus 13:21 says that (NEXT SLIDE) “The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire.” **What a wonderful God—He will lead us day and night!** The Lord led them down the west side of the Red Sea, next to the Egyptian Desert. We read in chapter 14:2 (NEXT SLIDE) that God led them to a place to “camp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.” My father, who spent almost 15 years in Egypt, feels he knows where this place is as it is described in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. It is a place where God could demonstrate His power against the Egyptians. Some Biblical scholars think the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea in a place where there was a waist-deep sea of reeds. Of what value would that be for God to demonstrate His power? Absolutely no value at all! In reality, it was a very difficult place. As the Israelites were progressing south they had the Egyptian Desert to the west, a mountain in front of them, the Red Sea to the east, and Egypt behind them. The chapter goes on to describe how Pharaoh changed his mind and marshaled his forces to pursue the Israelites with “six hun-

dred choice chariots and all the chariots of Egypt.” Verse 10 (NEXT SLIDE) says that, when the Israelites heard Pharaoh’s army coming, they became terrified. **Why is it that when God is leading, we become afraid?** The Israelites had the demonstration of the cloud and pillar of fire—why not trust in a power that was leading them? Let’s learn the lesson. The Israelites were so distraught they chided Moses in verse 11 (NEXT SLIDE) saying, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Why do we act the same way at times? We see God’s miraculous signs of guidance and mercy, and then something goes wrong and we blame God.

Then, in verse 13, (NEXT SLIDE) Moses tells the people not to be afraid and to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which HE will accomplish for you today.” **Often we are tempted to act on our own impulses without allowing the Lord to guide our steps. However, the Lord asks us to go forward only under His direction.** Thus Moses gave the powerful promise, in verse 14, (NEXT SLIDE) that should be the promise we all claim as we face the culmination of the great controversy between Christ and Satan:

“The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Brothers and sisters, **the Lord will fight for us; He will open the way. He will provide victory for His church, but we must trust Him; we must humble ourselves before Him; we must obey Him; and we must follow His leading.**

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

However, the children of Israel couldn’t see the big picture. They had forgotten how God had led them in the past. **Let us never forget how God has led this Advent movement in the past and how He will lead it to victory in the future to the glory of His name and the**

10 vindication of His plan of salvation before the whole universe. We are at the end of the great controversy and God says “Go Forward.”

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

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

What barriers are you facing this Sabbath?

1. Are you facing:

- Mountains of secular doubt in the Bible?
- A sea of liberal interpretation of the Word of God?

- Armies of spiritual confusion?

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

2. Are you confronted with:

- Mountains of financial difficulty?
- A sea of family and personal conflicts?
- Forces of negative social change?

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

3. Are you surrounded by:

- Mountains of miscommunication?
- A sea of unrest and confusion at home/at work/at church/in society?
- Forces of emotional conflict and mistrust?

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

Inspiration tells us (**NEXT SLIDE**) “God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that HE might manifest HIS power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him.” [PP 290; the entire page is outstanding!]

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exodus, Chapter 15, records the great victory song sung by Moses and the Children of Israel: “He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea. (**NEXT SLIDE**) The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God and

I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him."

Brothers and sisters of the Advent movement—we are on a tremendous journey. Look only to God for your deliverance. The messenger of the Lord declares, (NEXT SLIDE) **"The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path"** [PP 290].

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

GO FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD

Go forward, not backward! Do not succumb to the mistaken idea, gaining support even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of **accepting worship or evangelistic outreach methods merely because they are new and "trendy."**

We must be vigilant to test all things according to the supreme authority of God's Word and the counsel with which we have been blessed in the writings of Ellen G. White.

Don't reach out to movements or megachurch centers outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church which promise you spiritual success based on faulty theology.

Stay away from non-Biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism—such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted. Look WITHIN the Seventh-day Adventist Church to humble pastors, evangelists, Biblical scholars, leaders, and departmental directors who can provide **evangelistic methods and programs that are based on solid Biblical principles and "The Great Controversy Theme."**

Go forward, not backward! Use **Christ-centered, Bible-based worship and music practices in church services.** While we understand that worship services and cultures vary throughout the world, **don't go backwards into confusing pagan settings, where music and worship become so focused on emotion and experience that you lose the central focus on the Word of God.** All worship, however simple or complex, should do one thing and one thing

only: lift up Christ and put down self. **Worship 11 methods that lift up performance and self** should be replaced with a simple and sweet reflection of a Christ-centered, Biblical approach. To define it too closely is impossible; but, when you read in Scripture of the holiness of God's presence, the Holy Spirit will help you to know what is right and what is wrong.

Go forward, not backward! **Stand for truth though the heavens fall. Don't succumb to fanatical or loose theology** that wrests God's Word from the pillars of Biblical truth and the landmark beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Don't be swayed with **every little whim of "new" theology or complicated time chart purporting to carefully explain unusual or obscure concepts** that have little to do with our overall theology and mission. The historic Biblical beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will not be moved. The Biblical foundation will stand secure to the end of time. Listen to what we are told in *Selected Messages, Book 1, pages 207-208*:

"What influence is it that would lead men at this stage of our history to work in an underhand, powerful way to tear down the foundation of our faith—the foundation that was laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the Word and by revelation? —We are God's commandment-keeping people—every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word—especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of Heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority."

Go forward, not backward! **Stand firm for God's Word as it is literally read and understood.** Of course, we must always humbly recognize that we are finite, fallen creatures observing the works of an infinite omnipotent God.

12 There are things in both of God's two great books of nature and Scripture that we do not fully comprehend. In fact, we are told that the sacrifice of Jesus will be "the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity" [SC 88-89]. But **that which the Lord, in His mercy, has given to us in clear language is to be taken as fact. Simply because He said** so must not be shrouded in skepticism. **Don't go backwards to misinterpret the first eleven chapters of Genesis or other areas of Scripture as allegorical or merely symbolic.** Just this week we have once again affirmed, in an overwhelming manner, **that the Seventh-day Adventist Church both teaches and believes in the Biblical record of Creation which took place recently, in six literal, consecutive, contiguous 24 hour days.** The Seventh-day Adventist Church will never change its stand or belief in that foundational doctrine. **If God did not create this world in six literal days and then blessed the Sabbath day, why are we worshipping Him today on this seventh-day Sabbath as SEVENTH-DAY Adventists?** To misunderstand or to misinterpret this doctrine is to deny God's Word and to deny the very purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the remnant church of God called to proclaim the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. **Don't go backwards to atheistic or theistic evolution;** go forward to the prophetic understanding that loyalty to God, the Creator and Redeemer, will be seen in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the distinguishing characteristic of God's people in the very end of time. Seventh-day Adventist Church members, **hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, institutions, and administrative organizations accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture.** Utilize wonderful resources, such as the Biblical Research Institute's new book on hermeneutics, that helps us know the correct way to interpret the Scriptures.

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

order to please the fancy. **Take the Scriptures as they read.**"

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

A few weeks ago I lost my precious marked Bible while traveling. While I treasured it, and I'm so sad not to have it with me today, **I praise the Lord I have not lost the Word of God.** You have not lost the Word of God! You have it in your hands either in printed form or on your iPhone, iPad, or other electronic device.

We must never take for granted the freedom we have to read and study God's Word. Ellen White spoke poignantly about the Bible in 1909, at her last public appearance at a General Conference Session. After speaking, she left the platform and then came back and took hold of a large Bible, and with trembling hands held it out to the congregation and said, **"Brothers and Sisters, I commend unto you this book."**

Today my dear brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, **we must stand firm on the foundation of Scripture. As God's "people of the Book," let us read the Bible, live the Bible, teach the Bible, and preach the Bible** with all power from on high.

Go forward, not backward! **Let Scripture be its own interpreter.** Our church has long held to the Historical-Biblical method of understanding Scripture, allowing the Bible to interpret itself—line upon line, precept upon precept. However, one of the most sinister attacks against the Bible is from those who believe in the Historical-Critical method of explaining the Bible. This unbiblical approach of **"higher criticism" is a deadly enemy of our theology and mission. This approach puts a scholar or individual above the plain approach of the Scriptures and gives inappropriate license to decide what he or she perceives as truth, based on the resources and education of the critic.** Stay away from this type of approach because it leads people to distrust God and His Word. *Selected Messages, Book 1*, pp. 17-18, speaks directly to this issue: "When men, in their finite judgment, find it necessary to go into an examination of the Scriptures to define that

Ted Wilson Elected President at Atlanta GC Session 2010

**PART FOUR
OF FOUR**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

W
M
1
5
6
3

which is inspired and that which is not, they have stepped before Jesus to show Him a better way than He has led us. . . **Let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible. . . Cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost.**

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

GO FORWARD

Members of God’s remnant church, **God is telling us as we come to the end of time, “Go Forward.”**

Go Forward in lifting up Christ and proclaiming God’s grace. Go forward in presenting the three angels’ messages. **Go forward in pleading for revival and reformation.**

Go forward in following the Bible as it reads. Go forward in reading and adhering to the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy. Go forward in proclaiming to the world the good news of salvation and the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ.

God’s grace is leading people all over the world to “Go Forward.” **We must continually lift up the banner of public evangelism** at all times. The proclamation of God’s grace and the three

angels’ messages are changing people everywhere. The Holy Spirit is working on the hearts of those who hear this precious Advent message through your words and evangelistic witness—your proclamation of God’s grace.

We need to integrate evangelism into every aspect of life—such as many places have done, including the great South American Division, where “integrated evangelism” is simply a way of life.

THE EXAMPLE OF VASILI

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

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

Vasili felt led to heed Jesus’ command to take up his cross and follow Him. Vasili thanked God. He made his decision. He went to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was baptized. When he told his wife that he had been baptized, she said she already had divorce papers ready.

Vasili didn’t get agitated, but told her he loved her. Believing that they would support her objections, Galina accompanied Vasili to tell his family the news of his baptism. But, to her surprise, Vasili’s parents and brother accepted his decision without objection.

Vasili next went to his commanding police officer with his letter of resignation, explaining that he had been baptized. The officer said “What is that? Take it away and take off one week to think

14 about things.”

After a week, Vasili returned and again offered his resignation. Instead of accepting it, the commanding officer promoted Vasili so he wouldn't have Sabbath conflicts.

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

Later Galina's mother got cancer and Vasili and Galina visited her and prayed for her. Through God's intervention she was healed! Galina's heart was softened and she went straight to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was baptized.

I'm so happy to report to you today that Vasili Garascuic is now the treasurer of the Moldova Union and, by God's grace, Vasili and Galina are present with us today. Would you kindly stand? Praise God for the saving power of His grace!

FINAL APPEAL

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

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

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

Jesus is coming soon! Soon we will see in the eastern sky a small, dark cloud about half the size of a man's fist. It will get larger and larger and brighter and brighter. All of heaven will be poured out for this climax of earth's history. Everyone will see Him at the same time through a miracle of heaven. And there seated in the middle of millions of angels will be the One we have been waiting for—not the humble bro-

ken Lamb, not the High Priest, but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ our Redeemer!

We will look up and say, "This is the God we have waited for." Christ will look down and say, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." And **we will rise to meet the Lord in the air to go home to be with Him forever—the beautiful end of the Advent journey!**

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

I invite you to accept Christ's marvelous grace in your life, to renew your commitment to Him and this great Advent movement, to proclaim God's grace, and to ask the Lord to help this church "Go Forward."

TIME FOR PRAYER

Before singing our theme song and then our final benediction, let us seek God together in prayer.

I invite you to remain standing **and now turn to the person next to you or behind you—and in heartfelt, humble prayer—plead with the Lord for revival and reformation,** so the Holy Spirit can lead God's remnant church as we "Go Forward" proclaiming God's grace and the three angels' messages. Please pray together.

[After a brief time for the people to pray together, Ted Wilson ended with a short prayer. He then asked the congregation to remain standing for the singing of the General Conference Session theme song. The next session will be held in San Antonio, Texas, in five years.]

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. **But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing.** A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God’s Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the Word; but when the Spirit’s power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect. Guided by the teachings of God’s Word, with the manifestation of His Spirit, in the exercise of sound discretion, those who attend our meetings will gain a precious experience and, returning home, will be prepared to exert a healthful influence.

“The old standard bearers knew what it was to wrestle with God in prayer, and to enjoy the outpouring of His Spirit. But these are passing off from the stage of action; and who are coming up to fill their places? How is it with the rising generation? Are they converted to God? 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.

“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 unto vanity; we shall be distrustful of ourselves, having an abiding sense that our sufficiency is of God.

“We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world. Unbelievers have a right to expect that those who profess to be keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will do more than any other class to promote and honor, by their consistent lives, by their godly example and their active influence, the cause which they represent. **But how often have the professed advocates of the truth proved the greatest obstacle to its advancement! The unbelief indulged, the doubts expressed, the darkness cherished, encourage the presence of evil angels** and open the way for the accomplishment of Satan’s devices.

“The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the

thoughts of men; but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words; he takes account of actions and skillfully adapts his temptations to meet the cases of those who place themselves in his power. **If we would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words or actions, Satan would be defeated;** for he could not prepare his specious temptations to meet the case.

“But how often do professed Christians, by their lack of self-control, open the door to the adversary of souls! **Divisions, and even bitter dissensions which would disgrace any worldly community, are common in the churches, because there is so little effort to control wrong feelings and to repress every word that Satan can take advantage of.** As soon as an alienation of feeling arises, the matter is spread before Satan for his inspection, and the opportunity given for him to use his serpentlike wisdom and skill in dividing and destroying the church. **There is great loss in every dissension.** Personal friends of both parties take sides with their respective favorites, and thus the breach is widened. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Criminations and recriminations are engendered and multiplied. Satan and his angels are actively at work to secure a harvest from seed thus sown.

“Worldlings look on, and jeeringly exclaim, ‘Behold how these Christians hate one another! If this is religion, we do not want it.’ And they look upon themselves and their irreligious characters with great satisfaction. Thus they are confirmed in their impenitence, and Satan exults at his success.

“The great deceiver has prepared his wiles for every soul that is not braced for trial and guarded by constant prayer and living faith. As ministers, as Christians, we must work to take the stumbling blocks out of the way. We must remove every obstacle. **Let us confess and forsake every sin, that the way of the Lord may be prepared,** that He may come into our assemblies and impart His rich grace. The world, the flesh, and the devil must be overcome.

“We cannot prepare the way by gaining the friendship of the world, which is enmity with God; but by His help we can break its seductive influence upon ourselves and upon others. We cannot individually or as a body secure ourselves from the constant temptations of a relentless and determined foe; but in the strength of Jesus we can resist them.

“From every member of the church a steady light may shine forth before the world, so that they shall not be led to inquire, What do these people more than others? **There can be and must be a withdrawal from conformity to the world, a shunning of all appearance of evil,** so that no occasion shall be given for gain-sayers. We cannot escape reproach; it will come; but we should be very careful that we are not reproached for our own sins or follies, but for Christ’s sake.

“There is nothing that Satan fears so much as

16 that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. **If Satan had his way, there would never be another awakening, great or small, to the end of time.** But we are not ignorant of his devices. It is possible to resist his power. **When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come.** Satan can no more hinder a shower of blessing from descending upon God's people than he can close the windows of heaven that rain cannot come upon the earth. **Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from the assemblies of His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises.** Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, 'not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts' (Zechariah 4:6).

"We are in the great day of atonement, when our sins are, by confession and repentance, to go beforehand to judgment. God does not now accept a tame, spiritless testimony from His ministers. Such a testimony would not be present truth. The message for this time must be meat in due season to feed the church of God. But **Satan has been seeking gradually to rob this message of its power, that the people may not be prepared to stand in the day of the Lord.**

"In 1844 our great High Priest entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to begin the work of the investigative judgment. **The cases of the righteous dead have been passing in review before God. When that work shall be completed, judgment is to be pronounced upon the living.** How precious, how important are these solemn moments! **Each of us has a case pending in the court of heaven.** We are individually to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. In the typical service, when the work of atonement was performed by the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, **the people were required to afflict their souls before God, and confess their sins, that they might be atoned for and blotted out. Will any less be required of us in this antitypical day of atonement,** when Christ in the sanctuary above is pleading in behalf of His people, and the final, irrevocable decision is to be pronounced upon every case?

"What is our condition in this fearful and solemn time? Alas, what pride is prevailing in the church, what hypocrisy, what deception, what love of dress, frivolity, and amusement, what desire for the supremacy! All these sins have clouded the mind, so that eternal things have not been discerned. Shall we not search the Scriptures, that we may know where we are in this world's history? Shall we not become intelligent in regard to the work that is being accomplished for us at this time, and the position that we as

sinners should occupy while this work of atonement is going forward? **If we have any regard for our souls' salvation, we must make a decided change. We must seek the Lord with true penitence; we must with deep contrition of soul confess our sins,** that they may be blotted out.

"We must no longer remain upon the enchanted ground. We are fast approaching the close of our probation. Let every soul inquire, How do I stand before God? **We know not how soon our names may be taken into the lips of Christ, and our cases be finally decided. What, oh, what will these decisions be!** Shall we be counted with the righteous, or shall we be numbered with the wicked?

"Let the church arise, and repent of her backslidings before God. Let the watchmen awake, and give the trumpet a certain sound. It is a definite warning that we have to proclaim. God commands His servants, 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins' (Isaiah 58:1). **The attention of the people must be gained; unless this can be done, all effort is useless.** Though an angel from heaven should come down and speak to them, his words would do no more good than if he were speaking into the cold ear of death.

"The church must arouse to action. The Spirit of God can never come in until she prepares the way. There should be earnest searching of heart. There should be united, persevering prayer and, through faith, a claiming of the promises of God. There should be, not a clothing of the body with sackcloth, as in ancient times, but a deep humiliation of soul. We have not the first reason for self-congratulation and self-exaltation. **We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.** He will appear to comfort and bless the true seekers.

"The work is before us; will we engage in it? We must work fast, we must go steadily forward. We must be preparing for the great day of the Lord. We have no time to lose, no time to be engaged in selfish purposes. **The world is to be warned. What are we doing as individuals to bring the light before others?** God has left to every man his work; every one has a part to act, and we cannot neglect this work except at the peril of our souls.

"O my brethren, will you grieve the Holy Spirit and cause it to depart? Will you shut out the blessed Saviour, because you are unprepared for His presence? Will you leave souls to perish without the knowledge of the truth, because you love your ease too well to bear the burden that Jesus bore for you? Let us awake out of sleep. 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5:8)."—*Review, March 22, 1887; 1 Selected Messages, 121-127.*