

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Standing for the Truth – 20-26 April 2024

Christ would have us stand for the truth, as did the early reformers. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

Sunday: Persecuted Yet Triumphant – How has fulfilled Bible prophecy strengthened your faith? The fulfilment of the prophecy in Daniel 7:8 must strengthen true Seventh-day Adventists who are familiar with the faith of our Adventist pioneers. Daniel beheld a little horn that came up. The little horn plucked up three horns. This little horn, as students of prophecy know, was the papacy. “The three horns plucked up before it were the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Vandals. And the reason why they were plucked up was because they were opposed to the arrogant claims of the papal hierarchy, and hence to the supremacy in the church of the bishop of Rome” {DAR 118.4}. The foundation of the papacy is false doctrines. The bishop of Rome had to firmly established the trinity doctrine and used it to fasten upon millions who would be deceived to accept popery. But the fourth century witnessed an obstacle thrown across the path of establishing the papacy. Arius, parish priest of Alexandria, sprung up his doctrine that was to counteract the trinity and occasioning so fierce a controversy in the Christendom that a general council was called at Nicaea, by the emperor Constantine, in AD 325, to consider and adjust it. The council settled questions on doctrine and described God as a trinity, articulating this faith in the Nicene Creed of AD 325. For denying the trinity, Arius was exiled by the emperor, paving way for the papacy. But the followers of Arius, branded Arians, continued to spread Arianism. Arianism became the faith of the three horns that prophecy say were plucked (Heruli, Vandals, Ostrogoths). The main reason why the Arian powers were uprooted by the little horn was because their religion openly opposed to the Trinity. But the unfavourable stain on these Arian powers was the accusation that the Arians also believing that Jesus was a created Being. Most of the history on Arians is written by trinitarians, and there is no conclusive evidence that Arians really believed Jesus was created, most likely they were falsely accused simply because they were opposed to the Trinity. What is clear is that Arians were non-trinitarian as were our Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. Today, even within our Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is corporately trinitarian, whoever is opposed to the trinity is branded Arian. The three horns were uprooted to give way to the Papacy: the Vandals (in 534 AD), the Heruli (in 493 AD) and the Ostrogoths (in 538 AD). They were destroyed because they opposed the Papal teachings of infant baptism, Mary worship, prayers to the saints, Sunday observance, and the Trinity. They were Sabbath-keepers and non-trinitarians. Our Seventh-day Adventist Church having accepted the trinity (first by stealth in a statement put in the 1931 Yearbook, and second by Session vote in 1980), shies away from featuring these three uprooted horns as Sabbath-keepers because they were also labelled “Arians”. But this is to strengthen our faith, knowing that our Adventist pioneers were also non-trinitarians and branded “Arians”.

Monday: Light Vanquishes the Darkness – How did the Waldenses’ light vanquish the darkness? Writing on the Waldenses, Ellen White says: “Amid the gloom that settled upon the earth during the long period of papal supremacy, the light of truth could not be wholly extinguished. In every age there were witnesses for God – men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath. How much the world owes to these men, posterity will never know. They were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented, or mutilated. Yet they stood firm, and from age to age maintained their faith in its purity, as a sacred heritage for the generations to come” {GC 61.1}. “But of those who resisted the encroachments of the papal power, the Waldenses stood foremost” {GC 64.1}. They were Sabbath-keepers. The Waldenses were non-trinitarians, as attested by their Confession of faith dated 1544: “1. We believe that there is but one God, who is a Spirit – the Creator of all things, the Father of all, who is above all 2. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son and image of the Father – that in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and that by Him alone we know the Father 3. We believe in the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, proceeding from the Father, and from the Son, by whose

inspiration we are taught to pray ...” (History of the Waldenses, Published by William Oliphant, Edinburgh, November 1827, p 277) – they believed that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, that is, “proceeding from the Father, and from the Son”.

Tuesday: Courage to Stand – How did the Waldenses show courage to stand amid the papal persecution? “The faith which for centuries was held and taught by the Waldensian Christians was in marked contrast to the false doctrines put forth from Rome. Their religious belief was founded upon the written word of God, the true system of Christianity. But those humble peasants, in their obscure retreats, shut away from the world, and bound to daily toil among their flocks and their vineyards, had not by themselves arrived at the truth in opposition to the dogmas and heresies of the apostate church. Theirs was not a faith newly received. Their religious belief was their inheritance from their fathers. They contended for the faith of the apostolic church, — “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 3. “The church in the wilderness,” and not the proud hierarchy enthroned in the world's great capital, was the true church of Christ, the guardian of the treasures of truth which God has committed to His people to be given to the world” {GC 64.2}. “The Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special objects of hatred and persecution. They declared the Church of Rome to be the apostate Babylon of the Apocalypse, and at the peril of their lives they stood up to resist her corruptions. While, under the pressure of long-continued persecution, some compromised their faith, little by little yielding its distinctive principles, others held fast the truth. Through ages of darkness and apostasy there were Waldenses who denied the supremacy of Rome, who rejected image worship as idolatry, and who kept the true Sabbath” – Ellen G White {GC 65.2}.

Wednesday: The Morning Star of the Reformation – How did Christ demonstrate that while He uses unlearned fishermen, He also uses the learned men? “In the fourteenth century arose in England the “morning star of the Reformation.” John Wycliffe was the herald of reform, not for England alone, but for all Christendom” {GC 80.1}. “Wycliffe received a liberal education, and with him the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. He was noted at college for his fervent piety as well as for his remarkable talents and sound scholarship. In his thirst for knowledge he sought to become acquainted with every branch of learning. He was educated in the scholastic philosophy, in the canons of the church, and in the civil law, especially that of his own country. In his after labors the value of this early training was apparent. A thorough acquaintance with the speculative philosophy of his time enabled him to expose its errors; and by his study of national and ecclesiastical law he was prepared to engage in the great struggle for civil and religious liberty. While he could wield the weapons drawn from the word of God, he had acquired the intellectual discipline of the schools, and he understood the tactics of the schoolmen. The power of his genius and the extent and thoroughness of his knowledge commanded the respect of both friends and foes. His adherents saw with satisfaction that their champion stood foremost among the leading minds of the nation; and his enemies were prevented from casting contempt upon the cause of reform by exposing the ignorance or weakness of its supporter” – EG White {GC 80.2}.

Thursday: Cheered by Hope – What lessons can we learn from the Waldenses and the Reformers that can sustain us in earth's final conflict? The Waldenses practiced country living, and so should we. “Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains — in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed — the Waldenses found a hiding place. Here the light of truth was kept burning amid the darkness of the Middle Ages. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith” {GC 65.3}. “In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell” {DA 121.3}. “Let every man be wide awake for himself, and try to save his family. Let him gird himself for the work. God will reveal from point to point what to do next” {RH Dec 11, 1900, par. 10}. “... our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one” {19LtMs, Lt 5, 1904, par. 3}.