

2026 1Q Christ in Philippians and Colossians

Lesson 4 Unity Through Humility

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What is the unity that Christ calls for His people to experience?

Does unity in Christ mean we all believe the same doctrines?

Does it mean belonging to the same denomination?

Can we be unified in Christ with people who do not believe the same things we do? Can we be unified in Christ with people who belong to different denominations?

When the church evangelizes, taking the gospel to the world baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit aren't they seeking to bring people into the unity of the faith?

But if that doesn't mean joining our denomination what does it mean? Isn't that what most Christian church's believe evangelism is, converting people to their version of Christianity?

Is there a unity that is experienced and achieved among the believers in Christ that is different from dogma, organizational affiliation, behavioral practices, and religious ritual and ceremony?

Can people from different denominations (or the same denomination), who believe differently about method of baptism, music style, diet, day they go to church services, Sabbath day activities, atonement models, still have the unity that Jesus wants them to have while disagreeing on things like this?

If so, what is the unity that Jesus brings? What are the core elements that all the saved will be united upon?

Wouldn't the core unity be based upon being reborn so that each person has hearts and minds that love God, each other, and God's ways, and thus everyone who is unified with Christ is actively seeking to apply God's principles, His laws, to their lives—each person is actively working with Christ to become more like Christ and fulfill God's calling for their life?

Does that look like conformity of behavior and ideological agreement? If someone you know isn't obeying the law the way you believe it is to be obeyed, can you still have unity with them? Does it matter what we mean when we say law?

If people are truly converted, have God's law written upon their hearts and minds—what does that look like functionally?

They love God and others, but they also **love truth** and are willing to grow in truth **as they comprehend it**, so they are open to truth, are actually motivated to grow and develop. But they also know every human is coming from a different place, with different capacities, different abilities, different knowledge base, and thus are learning and growing at different rates, therefore they **leave others free** to think and choose for themselves. They don't become thought police, but do, in love, become concerned about actions, conduct, choices that are objectively harmful and destructive—which are violations of God's design laws for life (not mere rules), and communicate those concerns in love, but still leave others free to make their choices and reap the consequences.

But as we grow in God's love **and truth**, we **will** come ever closer into agreement of doctrinal facts, best religious practices etc., because all truth leads back to God and objective reality—however, many wrong ideas and mistaken beliefs will not be cleared up until heaven. But what is cleared up for all the saved is their hearts, the spirit of fear and selfishness is replaced with the Spirit of Christ and we love God and others and practice the design law methods of **truth, love, and freedom**, and we do not seek to use coercive methods on the consciences of others.

And the intolerance, coercion, hostility, willingness to use force, intimidation upon people who think differently, believe differently, is a mark of the satanic spirit.

Consider these quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church, do you agree, and what are the implications?

- When Christ's prayer is fully believed, when its instruction is brought into the daily life of God's people, unity of action will be seen in our ranks. **Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ. The Spirit of God alone can bring about this oneness.** He who sanctified Himself can **sanctify His disciples**. United with Him, they will be united with one another in the most holy faith. When we strive for this unity as God desires us to strive for it, it will come to us. *Counsels for the Church* p. 45, emphasis mine.

Do you agree with this? And this unity is only possible by being reborn through trust or faith in Jesus. This is a real transformation of heart, not a legal adjustment in a book. Sanctification of His disciples is not the same thing as erasure of legal records in the books of heaven.

We don't become united through the penal legal theologies, we become united through reconciliation of our hearts and minds with Jesus and being recreated within by the indwelling Holy Spirit to have God's design laws for life written upon our hearts and minds.

But the penal legal theologies obstruct this unity for they are not based upon hearts that have been reborn to trust, but upon the spirit of fear and the need to hide their records, their sins, their selves from God for fear of what He will do if these things are not erased or hidden. This spirit of fear leads to intolerance of others who disagree with their view and the need to use power, authority, force to

purge from their presence members who don't meet the test of orthodoxy. The driver is not love for sinners, trust in God, but fear of God, sin, and punishment, the unrenewed heart trying to be good.

As I was preparing this lesson, I came across this quotation, consider what it describes, consider whether you believe it is true, consider, if you believe it is true, why it is true, and then consider is there something done in our society, under the guise of doing good, that actively interferes with the church accomplishing this?

- The Lord has made us His almoners [distributer of alms]. He places in our hands His gifts, in order that we shall divide with those who are needy, **and it is this practical giving that will be to us a sure panacea for all selfishness**. By thus expressing love to those who need help, **you will cause the hearts of the needy to give thanksgiving unto God** because He has bestowed the grace of benevolence upon the brethren, and has caused them to relieve the necessities of the needy. *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 343.3, emphasis mine.

It is through the exercise of this practical love that the churches draw nearer together in Christian unity. Through the love of the brethren, love to God is increased, because He has not forgotten those who were in distress, and thus thank offerings ascend to God for His care... **The faith of the brethren is increased in God**, and they are led to commit their souls and bodies unto God as to a faithful Creator... *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 344.1, emphasis mine.

First, what is being described as the process that brings unity? Active practice of love for others, helping people who have genuine needs. The statement is taking the position that when we choose to respond to the love God bestows upon us, by allowing that love to flow through us so that we act in loving service to others, this has a transforming and healing impact on those who do so. And as love grows in the hearts of people divisions fade away and people draw closer together in Christian unity.

Do you believe this to be true?

This is an outworking of the design laws of love, exertion, and truth for it is truthfully how reality works, all under the law of liberty because none of this is forced.

Can you think of something done in our society that presents itself as doing good, but rather that doing objective good, rather than actually helping, rather than promoting real good that is in harmony with the kingdom and principles of God, this so-called good activity has interfered with the work of the church, obstructed love, incited greater selfishness and sin, and injured millions?

What about government programs to redistribute wealth under the goal of helping the poor and the needy?

If you agree with the statement above, then it is the church's responsibility to help the poor and the needy, and when the church fulfills its role the gifts are given in love, voluntarily, which causes more love to grow in the heart of the givers, strengthens faith in God, and causes the recipients to experience

themselves as loved, valued, worthy of our concern, and motivates them with gratitude and love so that in response, they often align with, join, or certainly are friendly to the churches that are helping them. These individuals are motivated by love to better themselves and take hold of the loving hands reaching out to them and as they are objectively able become contributors who give to others rather than people continuing to need resources given to them. In this method love grows on all sides and individuality grows, characters mature, the image of Christ is developed within.

But why, from a Christian perspective, is it destructive, harmful, injurious for the government to take over this function and provide for the needy?

When the government takes over from where do the resources come that are given to the poor? Are the monies to help the poor provided by voluntary donations of people who, in love, want to help others? Or does the government use its power to tax people who would not otherwise give? And what happens in the hearts of people when they are forced to do things they have not chosen to do for themselves? Does love grow in their hearts?

Do the taxpayers, who function now as the donors of resources, participate as the distributors, the “almoners” of the blessing? Or is a faceless agency now inserted and monies arrived without love or human contact? Do the donors and the recipients experience the people to people love and concern when the government gets involved?

Do the recipients experience ever greater gratitude, value as individuals, see the care, compassion, concern of another human for them and are thereby won to love, or do they experience greater entitlement, selfishness, and demand for more? Do the recipients become connected with a community of people who want to see the full image of Christ restored in them, and do they themselves become invested in becoming autonomous, and putting themselves in a position where they can be a source of funds to bless others?

And for those who think my position against government redistribution of wealth to help the poor and needy is one of callousness, of hard heartedness, of selfishness, of elitist privilege and not having love for the poor—I say to you, don’t look at the rhetoric of those who claim they want to help the needy by these government programs, **look at the outcome**, the results, the impact government programs like this that have been running for decades and have spent hundreds of billions, if not trillions, have had. Have these programs eliminated poverty, homelessness, drug addiction? Have such programs improved the communities in which they have the greatest impact, in places where the most money is spent and the greatest number of people are receiving such funds? Or have we seen greater decay of communities where such programs have their greatest impact?

Have these programs lifted up or created generations trapped in decline? Have these programs resulted in society becoming ever more loving, unified, compassionate, caring, Christlike? Have these programs brought people closer to Jesus for salvation of their souls?

Satan is the great deceiver and he loves to get people to advance his kingdom under the guise of doing good. Jesus said that the poor will be with us always—no government program will eliminate poverty.

The Christian approach is to recognize the reality of the needy and engage them with loving support and help that his voluntarily provided in loving relationship that inspires them to connect, engage, become part of a community and then, within the capacity of their abilities apply themselves to God's kingdom, to develop themselves and mature, heal, become a contributor to bless others because they know the joy of giving to help others.

Government forced redistribution programs actively interfere with this. And I didn't even mention the layers of fraud, how these programs are used to steal money away from helping people under the pretense of helping people.

Read the first paragraph,

- Paul bases the necessity of unity on the teaching and example of Jesus. It's a theme that we find throughout the New Testament and especially in the epistles. The origin of disunity in the universe stemmed from the pride and thirst for position and power of a single angel in heaven, a sentiment that spread quickly, even within a perfect environment (see Isa. 14:12–14). It then gained a foothold in Eden through a similar discontent with the rules God had put in place and the desire for rising to a higher sphere than that which God had designed (Gen. 3:1-6). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 28.

What do you hear being suggested in this paragraph?

This paragraph, in my view, mixes certain truths **with the deadly error that led the angels into rebellion** and which prevents the church from fulfilling its end time mission—this paragraph has implied, stated, imbedded, the idea that imposed laws and rule-making is legitimate and sin is bucking the made up rules.

Note again what was said,

- The origin of disunity in the universe stemmed from the pride and thirst for position and power of a single angel in heaven, a sentiment that spread quickly, even within a perfect environment (see Isa. 14:12–14). It then gained a foothold in Eden through a **similar discontent with the rules God had put in place** and the desire for rising to a higher sphere than that which God had designed.

This is basically saying that God made up a rule that restricted Lucifer to a certain position, Lucifer didn't like God's rule, became prideful, and rebelled against the rule. And God made a rule for Adam and Eve and they chose to break His rule and got into legal trouble.

The truth is that Lucifer did not like the position he was in and he did become prideful, and he did want to rise to a position that was not his, specifically he wanted to take the position of Christ. How did Satan seek to confuse the angels and get them to join his side in his dissatisfaction with heaven?

By presenting the very argument, distortion, lie that the lesson is presenting!

Satan argued God made up a rule and the rule was unfair to Lucifer and kept Lucifer from experiencing what was rightfully his. He claimed that he was equal to Christ and therefore should not be restricted from the heavenly counsels that Christ was a part of.

But this is a lie—Lucifer was not restricted from the heavenly counsels that Jesus participated in **because of a made up rule—he was restricted by reality**, by design law, by the fact that he is a creature with finite abilities and that Christ is fully God, and the counsels Christ entered were the counsels of infinity, the counsels of infinite beings, with infinite minds, capacities, knowledge. Lucifer’s restriction was not a rule, it was simply how reality functions.

As Paul wrote:

- God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and **who lives in unapproachable light**, whom no one has seen or can see. 1 Timothy 6:15-16 NIV84.

Why unapproachable? Because of a rule, a heavenly TSA agency and security screen? No! unapproachable by reality, finite minds cannot approach, enter into, and assimilate infinity!

As John wrote:

- No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known. John 1:18 NIV84

Yes, Lucifer became prideful and came to think of himself as equal with Christ—and we should consider how that was even possible? Because the fact that could even happen says something wonderful about God!

What circumstances would be necessary for a creature to even be able to consider the idea that they are equal to the Creator, much less fully believe it and then act upon it?

Wouldn’t that creature first have to have real freedom of thought? What does that say about God?

But wouldn’t the circumstances be that Jesus had to be so humble, unassuming, “down to earth” so to speak, in His interactions with His creatures that they were not intimidated, not dominated, not afraid?

What does it say about God, who is all powerful, that He interacts with His creatures in such a way that His power isn’t used to force, coerce, intimidate and that they could choose to use their freedom to rebel against Him and think it was their right to do so?

If you think this is far-fetched, consider Jesus here on Earth, wasn’t He still fully God? And did He present Himself in such a way to dominate, intimidate, frighten people, or was He so humble, kind,

gentle, meek, gracious that many human beings thought they were equal if not better than Him and they refused to believe He is God and killed Him?

So, God, when we see things clearly, looks beautiful, amazing, wonderful, totally trustworthy, all powerful but never uses His power to force, intimidate, control—and that is one of the primary purpose of creating the Sabbath—the day when God rested, when God stopped using power and refused to force His creatures to comply. And God, as only a Creator can do, put this proof, this evidence of His character of love, right into time so that no creature can remove it. But, as is totally predictable, the enemy of God has sought to corrupt this memorial of God's character by getting people to think the Sabbath is nothing more than a rule made up and that it is, like human law, subject to change and that it changed to Sunday. And if that were so, then Satan's arguments would be correct, God just makes up rules and uses power to enforce them. But the Sabbath is set apart, holy, not by a rule, but by Creation, by God's conduct, actions, and investment in it. The first six days of creation week God used power, but the seventh-day God rested, God stopped using power and created a day, a time, for His creatures to think for themselves and come to their own conclusion. And Satan hates the Sabbath for its existence proves he is a liar.

So Lucifer becomes prideful, forgetting that every one of his abilities, talents, intelligence, skill, and position as covering cherub were all given to him by Jesus. And Lucifer's pride caused him to think that he could handle infinite knowledge, infinite power—and thus Satan **made up the lie that the only reason he couldn't go into those counsels was because God made up a rule restricting him** and God enforces His rules with threats of punishment—he alleged the angels were not really free.

This lie, when believed, breaks the circle of love and trust and leads to rebellion. It is imbedded in the lie told to Eve in Eden, where he told her that if she ate she would not surely die. The serpent basically says, “there is nothing actually wrong with eating the fruit, doing so doesn't actually cause harm, you won't really die. God just made up a rule and breaking His rules don't harm you—sure God can harm you for breaking His rules, but breaking His laws are not harmful in themselves, God just uses the threat of execution to control you.”

This is the exact same poisonous stew being spewed by all those who continue to teach that God's law functions like human law, made up rules, which cause them to teach that God is the source of pain and death inflicted for justice's sake.

The editors of our quarterly should know better as this has been spelled out in detail by EGW, one of the founders of the SDA church:

- The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John 1:1, 2. **Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose**—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God... Proverbs 8:22-30. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.1, emphasis mine.

Jesus is God fully, with life original, underived from another source, unborrowed, an eternal and infinite being.

- **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God**, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. **God desires from all His creatures the service of love**—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes **no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will**, that they may render Him voluntary service. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 34.3, emphasis mine

God's government is founded on design law, not rules, love cannot be commanded, it is a functional protocol for life and health. And love cannot be achieved by forced obedience.

- **So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God.** It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state. **There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven.** *Patriarchs and Prophets* 35.1, emphasis mine.

The unity that God desires cannot be achieved through external rules or imposed laws and law enforcement. Only through love reproduced in the heart through trust which is established based upon the truth is unity achieved. And the penal legal theologies obstruct all of this because they teach Satan's original lie and that incites distrust of God and rebellion.

- Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” Ezekiel 28:17. “Thou hast said in thine heart, ...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will be like the Most High.” Isaiah 14:13, 14. Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. **Not content with his position**, though honored above the heavenly host, **he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator**. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. **And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.** *Patriarchs and Prophets* 35.2

Satan said “I will exalt my throne.” This is a claim, an assertion, an attempt to elevate oneself by rule, fiat, imposed law—that is what creatures do. Satan's pursuit of elevation was not based on objective reality, on him actually being superior to Christ, but on a claim asserted—which is a lie, fantasy, false. And Satan seeks to get other angels to join his rebellion against God, how? But asserting God is not

trustworthy? How, by disputing the rightful position of Jesus as supreme, thus calling God's government, justice, trustworthiness into question. And he does this by asserting God made up a rule that restricted Lucifer but permitted Christ to enter counsels with the Father.

- **To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God**, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God. But He who would have the **will of all His creatures free**, left none unguarded to the bewildering sophistry by which rebellion would seek to justify itself. **Before the great contest should open**, all were to have a clear presentation of His will, whose wisdom and goodness were the spring of all their joy. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 36.1

God is love, His law is love, and love requires freedom. God does not impose laws and use power to enforce them. God leaves none unwarmed...

- The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might **set forth the true position of His Son** and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. **The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent** One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11.), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. **Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will.** The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was **still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants.** But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love... *Patriarchs and Prophets* 36.2, emphasis mine

Did the Father saying Christ is equal with Himself cause it to be so, or did the Father say it because it was always so? Why then did God need to say it? Because Satan was lying and asserting that there was no difference between him and Jesus.

And if you have questions about whether earth and humans were created after the angels, the Bible doesn't leave us in doubt:

- "Where were you **when I laid the earth's foundation?** Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and **all the angels shouted for joy?** Job 38:4-7 NIV84.

The angels were already in existence and the war already began when God created this planet and human beings. Remember Revelation 12:7 There was war in heaven Satan and his angels were cast out

to the Earth? Why? Because it was Jesus demonstrated by deed, by action, not by mere proclamation, that He is in fact fully God, Creator, and not a creature like Lucifer. Remember Scripture teaches that all things were made by Christ and without Him nothing was made that has been made.

- But again he [Satan] was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and **envy of Christ** was once more indulged... The Son of God was exalted above him, as one in power and authority with the Father. He shared the Father's counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God. **“Why,” questioned this mighty angel, “should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?”** *Patriarchs and Prophets* 36.3, emphasis mine

Lucifer's questions insinuate that there is no objective difference between him and Christ. They suggest that God made up a rule to give Christ privileges that are not inherent, but are simply arbitrarily dispensed. In other words, this argument is an argument that God uses imposed rules, just like our lesson has stated.

But the Bible teaches that

- Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. *Philippians 2:5-6 NIV84*, emphasis mine.

Jesus is by nature God, Lucifer is a creature. Lucifer seeks to rise up by claim, rule, external authority. Christ is supreme by reality.

- Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. **He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings**, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide.

What kind of law is Lucifer describing here? Do you think Lucifer was telling the angels that they did not need to have the laws of gravity, physics, molecular bonds, friction, motion, etc., operate in them, that angels could control the operations of the universe independent of God? Or do you think he is insinuating that angels don't need rules to govern their conduct, that they are capable of guiding themselves? Lucifer is the source of the lie that God's laws are made up rules.

- They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err. **The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor.**

Was Christ exalted above Lucifer? Exaltation implies elevation from a previously lower position. Was Christ exalted above Lucifer, or, as Philippians states, was Christ by nature God and therefore always above Lucifer? So the assertion by Lucifer that Christ was exalted is another lie that God made up a rule, made up an arbitrary distinction. This assertion claims that Christ's elevation is not inherent in the constitution of their beings, but simply that the Sovereign chose to grant Christ privileges He denied give to Lucifer. He is presenting God to be like a creature, and that is exactly how the penal legal model, which is based on imposed law presents God.

- If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. **But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage.** Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 37.1

Lucifer here asserts another lie that a Ruler is placed over them, a dictator, a Caesar, that Christ is not by nature the Creator, that Christ is a creature and he was only elevated by fiat, by rule, and God could just as easily have elevated Lucifer but he didn't so, thus God is unfair. Lucifer's entire war against heaven, coming out of his pride and jealousy of Christ, is advanced upon the lie that God's laws are made up laws—**and God is waiting for a people on earth to finally return to worshiping Him as Creator and reject this long standing lie.**

- **There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.** Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 38.1

Christ is fully God, always has been, always will be, but Lucifer's lies required the truth to be declared, but God declaring the truth didn't make it truth, it was already true. This is design law, reality, the way things actually are. Lucifer is the creator of fantasy, make belief, lies, fraud, the originator of distortion that God's law functions like human law and justice is God punishing law breakers.

- Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God. While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, **he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government.**

What are the kinds of laws that can be changed? Thus Lucifer's arguments again are that God's laws are not design laws, not the law of love described earlier in this chapter, but made-up rules coercively enforced, the laws of a creature

- Thus while working to excite **opposition to the law of God** and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven.

And lies believed break the circle of love and trust thereby opposing God's design law and replacing the law of truth, love, and trust with the law of sin and death, fear, selfishness and distrust. And we see the same strategy used today by those working against God's kingdom—they often claim to be working for God, the church, the advancement of righteousness, or justice, or good. But their methods are the methods of Satan, imposed law with law enforcement.

- While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, **he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.**
Patriarchs and Prophets 38.2

And this is what the legalistic religious leaders who crucified Christ claimed; they claimed they were only seeking to uplift God's kingdom. And it is what the legalistic leaders in our church today are doing, claiming they are only seeking to advance the kingdom of God, but because they have embraced the lie about God's law they are obstructing God's kingdom.

I encourage you to read the entire chapter, it is brilliant.

SUNDAY

Read second paragraph,

- “Selfish ambition” is among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20, NKJV), and as James indicates, “where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there” (James 3:16, NKJV). The Greek word for “conceit” is used only here in the New Testament, but appears in extrabiblical literature in the sense of arrogance, hollow pride, and having an inflated sense of oneself. Paul uses a closely related word in admonishing the Galatians: “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:26, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 29.

What is the source for humanity today of this selfish ambition, this self-seeking?

We are born with a spirit of fear and selfishness that we inherited from Adam (Psalm 51:5). This spirit of fear, insecurity, drives us to all kinds of self protective self promoting actions in order to try and comfort ourselves.

What is the solution? Surrendering our lives in trust to Jesus and being reborn with His Spirit of love and trust.

The lesson lists what it calls 6 remedies prescribed by Paul for these problems:

1. *Consolation in Christ.* Paul will proceed to use Christ's own example as a powerful motivation.

What does this mean? Other versions translate this as encouragement, being made strong. I have rendered this "If you have experienced the courage that comes from unity with Christ"

Unity with Christ, experiencing friendship with Him, results in courage, confidence, comfort, in other words the insecurities and fears are eclipsed as we come ever closer to Jesus in love and trust.

2. *Comfort of love.* Jesus reveals divine love and commands us to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

It is by experiencing the love of God that we are won back to trust and choose to open the heart rather than continuing to run and hide in fear. And we grow in love as we love others.

3. *Fellowship of the Spirit.* The presence of the Holy Spirit creates a close Christian relationship like the one that pervaded the early church (Acts 2:42; compare 2 Cor. 13:14).

What is meant by fellowship of the Spirit? Other versions render it as "fellowship with the Spirit" NIV, GNT, "sharing in the Spirit" NRSV, "participation in the Spirit" ESV, "Share together in the Spirit" NCV.

What does this mean? Is it talking about we have fellowship with each other as believers in a healthy Christlike spirit? Or fellowship with the Holy Spirit?

I rendered it: "if you have experienced the enlightening and transforming power of the Spirit"

4. *Affection (or compassion).* We see this divine quality frequently manifested in the life of Christ (see Matt. 9:36, Matt. 20:34, and Mark 1:41) and described in the parables of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33) and the prodigal son (Luke 15:20).

Thoughts? Compassion in my view is better than affection, compassion means tender regard and desire for benefit toward others. Affection can mean strong feelings, which may not always result in compassionate actions.

5. *Mercy.* This quality, exemplified by Jesus, is to be seen also in the lives of His followers (Luke 6:36).

What is mercy? Is it gentle kindness? How is mercy applied, lived, acted out? Would this be an example of mercy or not?

- For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV84

Is it merciful to discipline or not discipline? What is required to act in mercy? Love in the heart and truth in the mind, love always rejoices with the truth, to be merciful requires both love and truth to act in ways that are redemptive.

6. *Being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* What a picture! It is difficult to imagine how Paul could emphasize the importance of unity more strongly. As Paul will point out, the mind we are to have “was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

What does this mean?

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Paul’s words provide a picture of humility: lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than ourselves, looking out for the interests of others and not merely our own. Easier said than done, right? But these are principles important to keep in mind in all our interactions. Often in conversation there is the tendency to concentrate on our reply to whatever is being said, rather than focused on listening in order to understand what the other person is saying and trying to see the issue from their point of view. Often strife arises from simple misunderstandings that could be avoided simply by active listening. We may not agree, but listening and seeking to understand the other person’s viewpoint is the first step for fostering healthy communication and trust. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 30.

Really great wisdom in this paragraph, something I need to get better at myself. I know in my life, I am many times too quick to move ahead of the conversation and anticipate where it is going rather than patiently listening.

Read last paragraph,

- Paul speaks of the unity “[produced by] the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3, AMPC), which creates “the peace that joins us together” (Eph. 4:3, EXB). If there is strife in the church, the Holy Spirit can calm the waters and bring us into unity, creating harmony. In the same chapter, Paul speaks of “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:13, NKJV). The two are related. Having the same faith, the same understanding of Scripture that springs from knowing Christ and His teachings, is vital for unity to prevail among us. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 30.

How is it the Holy Spirit brings unity and harmony? How does the Holy Spirit actually work? Can the Holy Spirit bring unity and harmony if people close their hearts to the Holy Spirit? Can people close their hearts to the Holy Spirit while they have their heads bowed in prayer?

So will the act of praying for the Holy Spirit in a contentious meeting necessarily result in unity and harmony?

What I have seen is that people with an authoritarian attitude in leadership, when challenged by thoughtful people with good evidence, will often call for prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to bring unity. But what they are actually doing is seeking to use the call for the Holy Spirit's presence and the expected unity to intimidate the members into conformity and agreement. If disagreement remains it will be implied that the members have a disruptive spirit and need to pray more.

I have rarely seen leaders in such a situation who after praying for the presence of the Holy Spirit to bring unity, get up and confess their wrong, correct their errors, repent and as the members for forgiveness.

Do you recall EGW's description of the leaders at the 1888 GC?

- On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, because **their spirit** was the same. ... They pronounced in their heart and soul and words that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fanaticism and delusion. They stood like a rock, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back **by their hard and wicked hearts, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working.** [Remember, she is speaking of the delegates to the SDA Church's General Conference session, not just church members; rather, these are church leaders, pastors, conference presidents, and publishing house directors.] Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ.** 1888, 1478.2, emphasis mine.

She also wrote:

- **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth,** lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. ["This truth" is referring to the truth that the Ten Commandments were added and are not eternal; that salvation is not legal, but actual transformation of sinners into righteous people by receiving the life of Christ through faith, all of which are founded upon the eternal gospel that God is Creator and His laws are design laws, the laws that life are built to operate upon.] By exciting that opposition **Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth**

with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world. *Selected Messages, Volume 1*, p. 234, emphasis mine.

And she wrote:

- But the **work that all heaven was waiting to do** (1888 Minneapolis) as soon as men prepared the way [Jones and Waggoner], **was not done. For the leaders closed and bolted the door against the Holy Spirit** (Letter 123, 1902, Battle Creek Letters, pp. 55, 56, emphasis mine).

TUESDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- Ultimately, we can change our mind, but we can't change our heart; only God can. The Holy Spirit needs to perform heart surgery on us, wielding the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), the "living and powerful" Word of God, "piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, NKJV). Only through the Holy Spirit can we really know ourselves because, by nature, our own heart deceives us (Jer. 17:9). The Hebrew word for "deceitful" ('aqov) refers to bumpy ground that trips us up; by extension, it means thoughts that are tortuous, twisted, and crooked. We must be transformed by the "renewing" of our mind in order that we may "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 31.

Can God change our heart without our consent? What is necessary to change our hearts? Enough truth and love from God to win us to trust, and then in trust we open the heart to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit brings us a new life, the life of Christ and we are reborn with a new animating motivating principle, spirit, energy, drive—that of love and trust.

WEDNESDAY

God is able to provide us this new life because of what Jesus did, read second paragraph,

- In contrast, Jesus was perfectly sinless. Though He was tempted "in all points . . . as we are" (Heb. 4:15), He never sinned, not even by a thought. Nevertheless, Hebrews 5:8 indicates, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (NKJV). Jesus' submission to the Father's will was always perfect. There was never a moment He refused to submit, though no doubt many times it was not easy. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 32.

Jesus became a real human being descended from Adam, through David, and Mary and thereby partook of the life breathed into Adam and corrupted by Adam. It was through this life that Jesus was able to experience temptations in all ways like we do. The Bible tells us we are tempted by our own feelings and Jesus in Gethsemane had a humanity, descended from Adam, that could also feel the fear, anguish, guilt, dread of death and separation from His Father. Jesus was tempted by that spirit of fear inherited from Adam to act to save self, to not go through the Cross.

But Jesus had a humanity that was also animated, brought to life, by the Holy Spirit and thus in the humanity of Jesus a new life, a sinless spirit, was alive and throughout His entire human sojourn Jesus chose, with His human brain, human mind, to only and always live in harmony with the spirit of love and trust He received from the Holy Spirit and at the Cross Jesus purged, killed, eliminated, the spirit of fear from the humanity He took upon Himself and He rose again in a purified, cleansed, renewed humanity and became the second Adam. The next verse from what the lesson quoted makes this clear:

- Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84.

Wasn't He always perfect? He was always sinless, but Bible perfection is maturity of character, until He went through the cross and purged the spirit of fear and solidified His humanity into perfect loyalty and maturity of godly human character, He was not yet perfected, He was not yet ready to be our High Priest, because He did not yet have the Remedy, the sinless human life free of the infection of fear and selfishness. Now, after His resurrection, He is not only the Son of God, He is the Son of Man, the descendant of Adam, a real part of this creation, but the only sinless one, the new head of the family, the only human who has a sinless life to share with all who trust Him. He is the vine and we are the branches who are grafted in by faith and receive His life and are reborn.

Consider the illustration described here,

- Wicked hands crucified the Lord of glory. But the **parent vine was planted on the other side of the wall. Though its boughs hang over to the world**, the precious root was safe, never to be uprooted, and **the dry, sapless stalks can be grafted into the living Vine** and bear rich clusters of fruit. 6LtMs, Ms 40, 1890, par. 59

THURSDAY

The title is The Mystery of Godliness—what does this bring to mind?

- To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27 NIV84

What do you understand this mystery to be?

That God became human for the purpose of eliminating the cause of death and restoring this creation to life and that we can participate in that life by faith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The God of Reality: Separating Truth from Fiction Seminar: August 13-16 2026 Orlando, Florida—More information coming soon.

REMEDY APP: Updated, many new features including the ability to listen to the audio right from the app!

AFRICA: Our first shipment of resources has arrived in Kenya, *Could It Be This Simple?* Wycliffe has been passionately sharing this end-time message about God with great success and Jacques van den Heever, our Come and Reason Ministries Director in South Africa has been able to produce and get him these resources. It is through the support of you our friends that he has been able to do this. If you are in Kenya or know someone there who would like this book email kenya@comeandreason.com Also Jacques has been translating many of our materials into Afrikaans for some time, but has now just provided our first blog translated into Swahili. More will be coming. If you want to access any of our ministry website and click the languages tab.

New Pamphlet: *The Trap of Perfectionism and The Fear of Making Mistakes.* These are available for free shipped to any US Postal address, they will also be in our resource section under the publications to print and share. You can read this online, download pdf, share with others, print your own. If you are not in the US, we anticipate our various hubs (Australia and South Africa) will eventually get this in print also, but until them, please use the online resource.

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