

The Great Controversy Standing for the Truth

Lesson #4 for April 27, 2024

Scriptures: Daniel 7:23-25; Revelation 2:10; 12:6,14; Jude 3-4; Acts 5:28-32; Psalm 19:7-11; 1 John 5:11-13; John 3:14-15.

1. The Christian church has been persecuted almost nonstop since the time when Jesus was crucified. Who do you suppose has been behind that?
2. The followers of Christ and the Christian church have suffered persecution for many years.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The early and medieval faithful Christians were characterized not only by their individual faithfulness to God and to His Word but also by the public stand they took in proclaiming the principles of God's kingdom and of salvation....

This era of reform comprises no ordinary period of persecution, though; rather, it constitutes a prophetic period of 1,260 years, spanning from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. **As in the case of the other prophetic periods of persecution, this era also points to the fact that the time of persecution is limited and that God is ultimately in control.... [How Does God limit Satan's activity?]**

The weapons of their offensive were not derived from their own strength, vision, or wisdom. Nor did these defenders of the faith mount an assault against the forces of evil with cunningly devised military strategies. Rather, the mission of the true Christians and the secret of their power consisted in their discovery of, love for, and proclamation of the Word of God, no matter the cost.

The work of the Reformers resulted in a double achievement for both humanity and God. Their **first** achievement was understanding that the love of God, as revealed in His Word, transforms the lives of His people and gives them hope in the kingdom of God. Their **second** achievement was the proclamation of Bible truth to the world in vindication of God's identity and character, both of which were denigrated by the forces of evil in the great cosmic war.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.††

3. In the Turkish city of Smyrna, the followers of Christianity collided with the Roman authorities.

[BSG:] The modern Turkish seacoast city of Izmir was once the **biblical city of Smyrna**, mentioned in the book of Revelation. This ancient city of approximately 100,000 inhabitants flourished in the late first and second centuries. It was a prosperous city, and it was fiercely loyal to Rome.

Once a year, all the citizens of Smyrna were commanded to burn incense to the Roman gods. Evidently, in the second century, Smyrna had a thriving Christian community, as well, and many were not going to comply.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, April 20.††

4. Mervyn Maxwell wrote *God Cares*, volume 1 and 2, on Daniel and Revelation and said:

[From *God Cares 2*:] The city of Smyrna was located north of Ephesus on a beautiful inlet of the Aegean Sea.... Under the name of Izmir, Smyrna still survives, the third largest city in Turkey and the most flourishing of the seven cities named in Revelation 2 and 3....

Within about seventy years after this prophecy was made, Smyrna became the site of a notable series of martyrdoms spread over a period of several literal days. The twelfth and last of the martyrs was grand old Polycarp, who by the time he died had served as principal minister of the Smyrna church for at least forty years. At a very advanced age, Polycarp was arrested in a farm house one Friday night. Immediately [sic] he asked the farmer's wife to prepare supper for the soldiers who had come to arrest him. While the soldiers ate, Polycarp stood to one side in the small cottage and prayed aloud for two hours for every Christian he could think of in the Roman Empire.

At the Smyrna amphitheater next day, Governor Status Quadratus was deeply impressed with Polycarp and tried to save his life. When his efforts proved futile, the governor asked Polycarp to curse Christ. He was certain that so grand a man as Polycarp would be eager to separate himself from Jesus, whom Rome had condemned as a criminal. But Polycarp gave a ringing response:

Eighty and six years have I served Him,
and never has He done me wrong.
How then can I curse my King,
who saved me?

The crowd—including in this instance, members of the Jewish synagogue—screamed for Polycarp to be fed to a lion. But the lions had just gorged themselves on other, non-Christian, victims. A herald explained that anyway it was past the hour in the day's entertainment when using lions was still legal. So the crowd demanded that Polycarp be burned to death. When the governor consented, the Jews, in a most unusual gesture of hostility, were foremost in gathering firewood even though it was Sabbath....

[Footnote:] Various Christian writers in the second and third centuries asserted that the Jews were often active in promoting persecution; however, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is the only trustworthy and contemporary account of an actual martyrdom that reports actual participation by Jews.—Maxwell, Mervyn, *God Cares*, vol. 2, 102.‡ [See also Musurillo, Herbert, editor and translator, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*].‡

5. Have you ever stopped to ask yourself what motivated people like Polycarp, Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, and Martin Luther? The Bible makes it quite clear that those who are faithful to God will be persecuted. However, they will be triumphant in the end.
6. **Read Daniel 7:23-25.** Based on the 1260-day prophecies found in Daniel and in Revelation, it was predicted that a time of terrible persecution and darkness would dominate the world.

[BSG:] Whenever God's people remain faithful to Him, Satan is enraged. Persecution often follows. The prophet Daniel described a time, still future to him, when the medieval church would "make war against" and "persecute" God's people (*Dan. 7:21, 25, NKJV*). The prophet John described this same period as a time when God's church would be forced to flee into the wilderness, where she would be "nourished for a time and times and half a time" (*Rev. 12:14, NKJV*). Revelation 12:6 adds, "The woman [the church] fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God" (*NKJV*). God's people

were nourished in the wilderness. His Word strengthened and sustained them as the great controversy raged on during this long and dark period of papal domination.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, April 21.†Ω§

Daniel 7:21-22: ²¹ While I was looking, **that horn made war on God’s people** and conquered them. ²² Then the one who had been living for ever [*sic-Br*] came and pronounced judgement in favour [*sic-Br*] of the people of the Supreme God. The time had arrived for God’s people to receive royal power.—*Good News Bible*.*††

7. There are many places in the Bible, like Psalm 46, that promise protection for God’s people.
8. Our interpretation of many Bible prophecies depends on our understanding of the “**day-year**” principle. This principle is supported very specifically by **Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6**.

[BSG:] The **day-year principle** rests not on these two texts only, but on a broad scriptural foundation. William Shea, chronologist and Old Testament scholar, gives twenty-three lines of biblical evidence throughout the Old Testament for this principle. Bible interpreters have used it throughout the centuries.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, April 21.††

9. Turning to history near the end of the Pagan Roman Empire:

[BSG:] The Visigoths, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were tribes that believed doctrines differently than Rome’s official teaching. [See below] **The 1,260 days began when the last of these barbarian tribes, the Ostrogoths, were driven out of Rome in A.D. 538**. This period of spiritual darkness continued until A.D. 1798, when the Napoleon’s general Berthier removed the pope from Rome. Countless Christians were martyred during this long period because they obeyed the Word of God. Even in death, they triumphed. In Christ they were free from the guilt and the dominion of sin, overcoming “through the blood of the Lamb.” Christ’s victory over Satan on the cross was their victory. Though they died, their death is only a rest until the return of Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, April 21.††

10. Let us look at more history regarding the tribes that invaded Rome.

[From Wolfram:] The Visigoths, [Ostrogoths](#) and [Vandals](#) were Christianized while they were still outside the bounds of the [Roman Empire](#); however, they converted to [Arianism](#) rather than to the [Nicene version](#) (Trinitarianism) followed by most Romans, who considered them [heretics](#).—Wolfram, Herwig (1997). *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. [ISBN 0-520-08511-6](#) [Retrieved January 21, 2024].‡

11. What is **Arianism**? The summary from *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes Arianism.

[Internet:] Arianism, **Christian heresy that declared that Christ is not truly divine but a created being**. According to the Alexandrian presbyter Arius (4th century), God alone is immutable and self-existent, and the Son is not God but a creature with a beginning.—Arianism, Google.—[Retrieved from Google, *Arianism*, January 21, 2024].†† [This was debated for centuries in the early Christian church. How could one be fully God and fully man at the same time?]‡

12. **How has Bible prophecy that has been fulfilled strengthened your faith?**
13. Notice that Jude prophesied that people **will arise within the church who reject Jesus Christ** as our only Master and Lord. That is a very apt description of Arianism which was believed by the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and the Visigoths.

Jude [1:]3-4: ³ I felt the need of writing at once to encourage you to fight on for the faith which once and for all God has given his people. ⁴For some godless people have slipped in unnoticed among us, persons who distort the message about the grace of our God in order the excuse their immoral ways, and who reject Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.—*Good News Bible*.*†

14. It must have been a very meaningful passage for those who tried to remain faithful Christians in the Middle Ages.

[BSG:] This admonition meant even more to believers in the Middle Ages after pagan practices had flooded into the church and human traditions compromised the Word of God. For many centuries, people, such as the Waldenses, stood as champions for the truths of Scripture. **They believed that Christ was their only mediator and the Bible their sole source of authority.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, April 22.†‡

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **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 **hallowed the true Sabbath.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 61.1.†‡

15. **Read Revelation 2:8-11.** This message to the church at Smyrna was a very stark warning.

[BSG:] These words were written to the church at Smyrna. One of the city's patron gods was Dionysius, the god of festivity and fertility. **When the priests of Dionysius died, a crown was placed on their heads in their funeral procession. John contrasts this earthly crown placed on the head at death with the crown of life placed on the heads of those who are victorious over the forces of evil.** The crown of life is presented to those who endured trials, difficulties, suffering, and death itself for Christ's sake.

The crown of life inspires these faithful believers to endure death itself for Christ's sake. The crown of life always motivates believers in challenging circumstances. It inspired the Waldenses through pain and persecution. They knew they would see Jesus one day and live with Him forever. The crown of life also speaks to us: we may go through trials now, but **a crown of life awaits us as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, April 22.†‡

16. Read Acts 5:28-32; Ephesians 6:10-12; and Revelation 3:11. These passages make it clear that God's faithful people will have to stand firm under very difficult circumstances. One group of Christians who stood out during the Dark Ages were the Waldenses.

[BSG:] One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Waldenses, and each one of the Reformers, was **their absolute allegiance to God, their obedience to the authority of Scripture, and their commitment to the supremacy of Christ, not the papacy.** Their minds were saturated with New Testament

stories of faith and courage.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 23.^{††}

[BSG:] **The Waldenses were one of the first groups to obtain the Bible in their own language. A moving account of their hand copying of the Bible written by Jean Leger, a Waldensian Bible copyist, contains firsthand information of their work including drawings. The Waldenses secretly copied the Scriptures in their mountain communities of northern Italy and southern France.** Youth at an early age were instructed by their parents to memorize large portions of Scripture. Teams of Bible copyists worked together to laboriously copy the Bible. Many of these Waldense young adults traveled throughout Europe as merchants quietly sharing the truths of Scripture. Some enrolled in universities and, as the opportunity arose, shared portions of the Scriptures with their fellow students. Guided by the Holy Spirit, at the right moment when they sensed a receptivity on the part of some honest seeker, select portions of their precious Scripture passages were given away. Many paid for their fidelity and devotion with their lives. **Although the Waldenses did not understand every Bible teaching clearly, they preserved the truth of God’s Word for centuries by sharing it with others.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 23.^{††}

17. While we recognize that these early reformers did not reject all the errors in the dominant Christian church, bit by bit they focused light on the errors that had crept into the church.
18. Read Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:140; Psalm 119:162; and Jeremiah 15:6.
19. As far back as the days of David, it was very clear that the Word of God, the inspired record of Scripture, is the cornerstone of our faith. The Bible was a cornerstone of the Reformation.

[BSG:] Each of the Reformers “rejoiced” in God’s Word. They “delighted” in doing God’s will. They “loved” His law. **One of the most significant foundational truths of the Reformation was the joy that studying the Scriptures brought. Bible study was not a laborious task. It was not a legalistic exercise. It was not a rigid requirement but a delight. As they studied the Scriptures, they were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, April 24.^{††}

20. **John Wycliffe** with his English Bible was known as the “Morning Star of the Reformation.”

[EGW:] The character of Wycliffe is a testimony to the educating, transforming power of the Holy Scriptures. It was the Bible that made him what he was. **The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, sharpens the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage, and fortitude; it refines the character and sanctifies the soul. An earnest, reverent study of the Scriptures, bringing the mind of the student in direct contact with the infinite mind, would give to the world men of stronger and more active intellect, as well as of nobler principle, than has ever resulted from the ablest training that human philosophy affords.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 94.2.^{††}

21. What counsel did the apostle Paul give to Timothy regarding sharing the Word of God?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-3.

[BSG:] The truth of God's Word and the joy of salvation in Christ so filled the hearts of the Reformers that they had to share it. **John Wycliffe spent his life translating the Word of God into English for two reasons alone: the living Christ changed Him through the Word, and the love of Christ motivated him to share what he had learned with others.**

Before Wycliffe, very little of the Bible existed in English. Though he died before Rome got to him, the papacy, undeterred, dug up his remains, burned them, and threw his ashes into a river. But just as those ashes were dispersed by the water, so God's Word, the water of life, spread far and wide as a result of His work. Thus God used Wycliffe, the "Morning Star of the Reformation."—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, April 24.^{†‡}

22. **We are studying the great controversy; it is an all-out, life-and-death struggle between Christ and Satan over the character and government of God.**

Hebrews 2:14-15: ¹⁴ Since the children, as he calls them, are people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became like them and shared their human nature. **He did this so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, ¹⁵and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death.**—*Good News Bible.*†*

[BSG:] What was it that cheered the faithful Waldenses during the horrible persecutions they faced? What gave Huss and Jerome, Tyndale, Latimer, and the martyrs of the Middle Ages courage to face the flames and the sword? **Faith in the promises of God.** They believed Christ's promise: "Because I live, you will live also" (*John 14:19*). They found His strength sufficient for life's greatest trials. They even found joy through fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. And their faithfulness was a powerful witness to the world.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, April 25.^{†‡§}

John 14:19: "In a little while the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and **because I live, you also will live.**"—*Good News Bible.*†*

23. John 5:24; John 11:25-26; and 1 John 5:11-13 were words that cheered the hearts of those suffering through the Dark Ages. Jesus had promised that those who stay faithful to Him already have eternal life.

24. Huss and Jerome, living in Bohemia in the city of Prague which is now the capital of the Czech Republic, were scholars who recognized as they studied that the church predominant in their day had many errors. As they began to preach against those errors, they received word from England about the work of John Wycliffe; and the light spread.

[BSG:] John Huss would not falter in the face of imprisonment, injustice, and death itself. He languished in prison for months. The cold, damp conditions brought on a fever that nearly ended his life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, April 25.[‡]

[EGW:] The grace of God sustained him. During the weeks of suffering that passed before his final sentence, heaven's peace filled his soul. "I write this

letter,” he said to a friend, “in my prison, and with my fettered hand, expecting my sentence of death tomorrow.... When, with the assistance of Jesus Christ, we shall again meet in the delicious peace of the future life, you will learn how merciful God has shown Himself toward me, how effectually He has supported me in the midst of my temptations and trials.”—Bonnehose, vol. 2, p. 67.

In the gloom of his dungeon he [John Huss] foresaw the triumph of the true faith.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 107.3-108.1.†‡

25. Is it really possible for Christians, even in our day, to believe that we could die for the truth and still have an everlasting life before us?

Mark 8:36: “Do people gain anything if they win the whole world but lose their life? Of course not!”—*Good News Bible*.*

[EGW:] God permitted great light to shine upon the minds of these chosen men, revealing to them many of the errors of Rome; but they did not receive all the light that was to be given to the world.... **They were not prepared to receive all the light at once. Like the full glory of the noontide sun to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore, He revealed it to the leaders little by little, as it could be received by the people.** From century to century, other faithful workers were to follow, to lead the people on still further in the path of reform.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 103.1.†‡ [“Light” was accepted “little by little.”]‡

[EGW:] In another letter, to a priest who had become a disciple of the gospel, Huss spoke with deep humility of his own errors, accusing himself “of having felt pleasure in wearing rich apparel and of having wasted hours in frivolous occupations.” He then added these touching admonitions: “May the glory of God and the salvation of souls occupy thy mind, and not the possession of benefices and estates. Beware of adorning thy house more than thy soul; and, above all, give thy care to the spiritual edifice. Be pious and humble with the poor, and consume not thy substance in feasting. Shouldst thou not amend thy life and refrain from superfluities, I fear that thou wilt be severely chastened, as I am myself” [again quoted from Bonnehose].—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 105.2-106.0.‡

26. Consider these questions posed in the Bible study guide. How would you answer them?

1. [BSG:] What is “**progressive light**”? Why does God reveal truth gradually? How do these principles apply to God’s church today?
2. How do new discoveries of truth relate to previous truths that God’s people have understood? **Why must new light never contradict old light?**...
3. How does John Huss’s letter impact your thinking today? What impresses you about this letter?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, April 26.†‡

27. Two of the major themes of this lesson are:

[BSG:] The Waldensians, John Wycliffe, and John Huss illustrate what it means to stand on the side of God, witnessing to and proclaiming the Word of God in the darkest times of the cosmic conflict.

God's Word is our greatest source of hope and power, enabling us to live, and stand, on God's side.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.‡

28. **Behind most persecution is at least one of the following of Satan's methods!**

[BSG:] Typically, the causes of early Christian persecution have been classified by church historians according to the following categories:

- *Economical* (e.g., a believer's profession of faith impacted, and often restricted, his or her transactions with local and regional businesses; see *Acts 19:23–27* [as below])
- *Social* (e.g., Christians refused to participate in immoral activities)
- *Political* (e.g., Christians were made scapegoats to solve political problems)
- *Religious* (e.g., Christian beliefs, practices, and growth were perceived as an existential threat to dominant religions)—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.‡§

29. One biblical example of the economical aspects of persecution of Christians is:

Acts 19:23-27:²³ It was at this time that there was serious trouble in Ephesus because of the Way of the Lord. ²⁴A certain silversmith named Demetrius made **silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis**, and his business brought a great deal of profit to the workers. ²⁵So he called them all together with others whose work was like theirs and said to them, "Men, you know that our prosperity comes from this work. ²⁶Now, you can see and hear for yourselves what this fellow **Paul** is doing. **He says that gods made by human hands are not gods at all, and he has succeeded in convincing many people**, both here in Ephesus and in nearly the whole province of Asia. ²⁷There is the danger, then, that **this business of ours will get a bad name.**"—*Good News Bible*.*†

30. As we know, **Satan's kingdom is built on lies and deception**. So, when people arise under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the truth, it is a direct attack on his kingdom. Any attempt to examine the truth is an existential threat to his life; and thus, anyone who accepts his lies will suppress any attempt at a search for the truth.

31. Some of the movements and forces at work in the Dark Ages and Middle Ages were:

[BSG:] **Waldensians, Franciscans, and Scripture**

By the beginning of the second millennium after Christ, the **Roman Catholic Church** had become a fearsome, centralized, and hierarchical behemoth in Europe. It also was a deeply corrupt institution. Church members could not overlook these developments. **They felt the need to identify the causes of the church's corruption and to propose solutions. This process resulted in numerous religious and mendicant [survive by begging] orders.**

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, **Francis of Assisi** (1181–1226), the rather worldly son of a wealthy family, had a mystical conversion experience, after which he renounced whatever property he had and declared his intention to imitate Christ's poverty as much as possible. **Francis founded the order of the Franciscans, which promoted poverty as a virtue.** The Franciscans were known for their street preaching. In 1209, Francis sought the formal recognition of his order by Pope Innocent III, who was in power from 1198 to

1216. After an initial hesitancy, the pope granted Francis's request in 1210. Francis also founded a **women's order, that of St. Clare**, as well as the **Third Order, comprised of laypeople**.

Just several decades earlier, by the end of the twelfth century, **Peter Waldo** (d. 1205), a successful businessman in southeastern France, also experienced a conversion, renounced his riches, and preached voluntary poverty. He also founded an order for the poor and appealed to the Papacy for approval. Although Pope Alexander III, who presided from 1159 to 1181, initially accepted Waldo's vow of poverty, his successor, Pope Lucius III, who presided over the papal see from 1181 to 1185, condemned Waldo and his movement, the Waldenses, as heretical, and banned them from preaching. Worse, over the next several hundred years, the Roman Catholic Church mounted horrific **persecutions against the Waldenses that nearly led to their extinction**.

So, let us consider the similarities before us between these two revivalist movements and religious orders, which emerged at about the same time in history. The founders of both movements, Francis of Assisi and Peter Waldo, had rather similar conversion experiences. Initially, both men founded their orders on similar spiritual rules: **poverty and street preaching**. Both men had similar **desires to reform the church**, and both appealed to the Papacy for approval of their orders. However, the two orders had radically different relations with the Papacy, and, consequently, they had different fates and endings. The Franciscans' request for papal approval was initially met with hesitancy but was later granted. In contrast, **Waldo's vow of poverty, which was initially approved by the Papacy, was later rescinded**. The Franciscans grew into one of the most influential Roman Catholic orders. (Today, we can see its influence most notably reflected in the fact that the current pope, although a Jesuit, honored Francis of Assisi by adopting his name.) On the other hand, the Waldensians endured one of the cruelest persecutions in history, persecution directed at their extermination.

The question of why is most pertinent here. What made the difference between these two movements or orders? The answer is in their ultimate allegiance. The Franciscans, very likely having learned from Waldo's experience, obtained papal approval by giving ultimate allegiance to the pope. That is, the Franciscans recognized the Papacy as the ultimate spiritual and temporal authority on earth and vowed to support unconditionally its authority in matters of doctrine and practice.

The **Waldenses**, on the other hand, believed that the ultimate authority for our lives and teachings sprang out of God's Holy Scripture. For this reason, they made **Scripture the heart of their study**, preaching, and living. Consequently, the Waldenses soon discovered and repudiated an increasing number of the Roman Catholic Church's falsehoods and compromises, such as:

- the veneration of the saints,
- most of the seven Catholic sacraments,
- the concept of transubstantiation,
- auricular confession of sins to human priests,

- the practice of infant baptism,
- the sale of indulgences,
- the doctrine of purgatory, and
- prayers for the dead.

Instead, the Waldenses proclaimed that God is the only Creator and Savior. They also proclaimed that Christ is the only Mediator, giver of grace, and forgiver of sins. They taught that worship was not restricted to the physical space of Roman Catholic churches but could be offered to God in any place.

The Waldenses did not, in their lifetimes, receive the reward for their faithfulness. But their ideas and their courage to stand for God’s Word against compromise and the devil’s falsehoods soon **inspired the morning stars of the Reformation, Wycliffe and Huss, as well as the rest of the Reformation movement**, from the sixteenth century onward. Not honored by humanity, these Reformers will be honored by Christ Himself at His glorious return. As part of their enduring legacy of faith, **the Waldenses bequeathed to us their implicit trust in the authoritative power of Scripture**. They understood that the success of Christianity resides not in the innate genius or stratagems of its members, but in their witnessing to others of what Christ has done and in pointing to God’s Word as the source of divine revelation and salvation. For this reason, the Reformers simply followed the apostle Paul’s exhortation to “preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2, *ESV*). They spread, in their wake, Bibles, or fragments of the Holy Book, and left the results with the Holy Spirit. The Waldenses were motivated in this work by the foundational, and great, **principle of sola scriptura**; that is, that Scripture, by itself, is the Word of God, that the Bible has the power to communicate God’s message to all humans, and that it is self-sufficient and makes sense to all its readers. It is precisely this ethos that later gave impetus to the identity, mission, unity, and life of the Advent movement in the 1800s.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54-56.†‡§

32. What aspects of the Protestant Reformation can we apply to our lives today?

[BSG:] The Waldenses spread the Word of God in times of persecution. Maybe, like them, you are in a setting of persecution. Or perhaps you are currently in a situation of religious tolerance and peacefulness. Either way, **what can you do to spread the Word of God in your circumstance in a meaningful way for the people around you?**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54-56.†‡

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Last Modified: March 9, 2024

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