

Revival and Reformation

Obedience: The Fruit of Revival

Lesson #5 for August 3, 2013

Scriptures: Matthew 26:69-74; Acts 5:28-32; 6:3-10; 9:1-9; Philippians 2:5-8.

1. In this lesson we will discuss the impact of revival and reformation in the lives of those who truly receive the Holy Spirit.
2. Looking back to the former rain and the experience at Pentecost, we recognize that thousands of people were converted in a day. Within a relatively short period of time, even Pharisees and priests had become Christians. (Acts 6:7; 15:5) And we have been promised that greater manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit will be seen in the latter rain than were seen in the former rain.

An illustration of the impact of revival on daily life can be seen in the Welsh Revival of 1904. Evan Roberts and some of his friends began earnestly praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They interceded, studied Scripture, and shared their faith.

The Spirit was poured out in response. Lives were changed. In six months there were one hundred thousand conversions in the small country of Wales. The results of this revival were seen throughout the country. Throughout the day, people flocked to churches by the thousands for prayer. The rough, cursing coal miners were transformed into kind, courteous gentlemen. Even the pit ponies in the coal mines had to learn new commands because the miners were not cursing at them anymore! Transformed, obedient lives sprang from converted hearts. This is irrefutable evidence of a true revival. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, July 27)

3. What is the result of a true revival? A changed life. Obedience to what? Revival is not just about warm, fuzzy feelings. A careful examination of the Gospels will reveal the fact that the disciples had the entire range of emotions while working with Jesus—sometimes very positive and sometimes quite negative. How did they feel in the upper room immediately after the crucifixion? The Greek word for *obedience* indicates a humble willingness to listen.
4. So, what are the clear evidences of revival in a Christian's life? Obedience—living a Christ-like life. (See *TMK* 293) One good example of the changes that take place in the life of someone who was truly experiencing revival and reformation is the example of Peter. Read Matthew 26:69-74; John 21:15-19; and Acts 5:28-32. In the upper room before the crucifixion, Peter was boldly asserting his commitment to his Lord and Master. A few weeks after experiencing that terrible denial three times and recognizing what a fool he had made of himself, he was demonstrating submission, a recognition of the fact that Jesus knew him better than he knew himself. But, a few weeks later after the Pentecostal experience, Peter was bold in favor of the gospel; in Acts 4 and 5, he pointed his finger directly at the Pharisees and Sadducees and accused them of being directly responsible for the murder of the Messiah. What a change!
5. Another excellent example of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in someone's life is the story of Stephen. Read Acts 6:3-10; 7:55. Could you choose seven people you know who are full of the Holy Spirit? Don't you wish we had a record of Stephen's discussions and presentations in the synagogue of the Freedmen? His arguments were compelling and unanswerable. But, to his opponents that was so upsetting that they were determined to get rid of him. He was called before the Sanhedrin where he proclaimed that marvelous, marvelous sermon recorded in Acts 7. Of course, the result was his death. And his death was followed by a period of severe persecution against Christians in and around Jerusalem; that led to Christians being scattered in many directions, carrying the gospel with them.

6. Could that story be repeated in our day? Will there be people who will become martyrs for the Christian cause prior to the second coming of Jesus? Could we be among them? When the day comes when we have to face the Devil in person, will we be able to stand straight and tall and speak boldly on God's behalf as did Peter and Stephen? It will be God's Word versus false miracles!
7. Read Acts 9:1-9. On that long walk, he had time to think! The very familiar story of Saul's conversion on the Damascus road raises a number of questions. If God can produce a Paul through the use of one blinding flash of light, why doesn't He do it more often? What was it about Saul/Paul before the Damascus road experience that led God to know that he would turn into the Paul we know about? And what was Paul's experience immediately after that blinding flash of light? After he had been led into the city of Damascus, he basically was handed over to the care of the Christian church where he was given further instructions from God.

Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world. [Ephesians 3:10]—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

8. What happened next to Paul? What do you suppose was going through his mind during those three days of blindness? How different was it than while on that long walk to Damascus?
9. Paul had an incredible education in Scripture. But, recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah caused a "fruit basket upset" in his thinking, a paradigm shift. Over the next three years, he had to rethink his understanding of the Old Testament. It is quite possible that he had memorized much of the Old Testament. After those three years, he was unstoppable. He had passion!
10. Read Acts 9:10-16. Paul was shocked by a blinding flash of light. Ananias was shocked by a vision from God. What do you think was the greatest shock to Ananias and to the Christian Jews in Damascus: 1) The fact that the foremost persecutor of Christians had now become a Christian, or 2) The fact that God said Paul was to go forth to evangelize Gentiles?
11. We have already suggested that Jesus's life was guided each day by the Holy Spirit. How would you describe Paul's life? Do you think he might have been guided, convicted, instructed, and empowered by the Spirit? Did Paul ever regret living the life which he lived? Read Acts 26:18-32. There are many things about the life of Paul of which we do not know anything. (2 Corinthians 11,12) We do know that a number of people—surprising people—were converted in short periods of time by the testimony of Paul. By contrast, we see the example of people like Agrippa. Paul had dedicated his life to Christ. Agrippa listened to him and turned away. How often do we do that? Have you felt the guiding power of the Holy Spirit in your own life? How did you respond? If the Holy Spirit came to you on a daily basis directing your life, would you be willing to crucify self and follow His guidance? Or, like Agrippa, would you turn away?
12. How often do we find excuses when we feel convicted by God to do something?
13. Of course, the ultimate example of the Spirit-guided life was Jesus Himself. From the time He was a child, His life was a rebuke to the sinners around Him. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, anointed by power at the time of His baptism, and throughout His life apparently planned on a day-by-day basis with His Father and the Holy Spirit what He was going to do that day.
14. Read Philippians 2:5-8. Why would God—the three Members of the Trinity—plan for such a life as the life that Jesus's turned out to be? He was Someone who while He was fully God was

willing to set aside His divinity and become a Human Being; and not only that but He was also willing to become a servant to others and finally to die the death of a common criminal. Why would God do that? The Trinity planned it all! Clearly, God was trying to teach us something. Do we know for sure what it was? Could one of us or a group of us live truly Spirit-directed and Spirit-filled lives that are Christ-like in the 21st century? What would such a life look like?

15. Paul described himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1) In Romans 6:15-23, he contrasted what it is like to be a slave of sin and what it is like to be a slave of righteousness. In Romans 8:12-17, it is bondage and adoption that he contrasted.
16. Do we clearly understand the difference between bondage and adoption? Does doing what is right because it is right make you feel free? Or, put you in bondage?

At the entrance gate of the path that leads to everlasting life God places faith, and He lines the whole way with the light and peace and joy of willing obedience. The traveler in this way keeps ever before him the mark of his high calling in Christ. The prize is ever in sight. To him God's commands are righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.—Ellen G. White, *RH*, May 9, 1907 par. 2; *In Heavenly Places* 183.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His saving grace. The men and women, who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

17. Read Acts 5:1-11. Not everyone whose life was touched by the experience at Pentecost responded as did Stephen and Paul. Ananias and Sapphira tried to lie to God and to Peter. They thought they could partake of God's blessings and enjoy the fellowship of the early Christian group and still selfishly keep back a part of what they had promised to God and to the church. As a result they both died on the church floor!
18. Why is it so difficult for us to truly learn and exhibit self-denial and self-sacrifice? Philippians 2 tells us that Christ emptied Himself. Of what are we supposed to empty ourselves? The kingdom of Satan is ruled by selfishness; God's kingdom is ruled by love. How difficult is it for us as naturally-born, selfish human beings to completely change the motives in our lives? How do we reach the place where our highest desire is to do God's will? And what is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is now in control of our lives? Could you tell if you were, in fact, living in accordance with God's will?
19. Read Galatians 5:22,23. It is very interesting to note that the fruit of the Spirit includes a lot of things, but the final step in the fruit of the Spirit is to live a self-controlled life! The Holy Spirit does not want to control us; He wants us to do what is right because it is right and because we choose to do so. Why is it so easy to live the worldly lifestyle? Why does it often seem so difficult to live Godlike lives? Is this a result of our inherently selfish natures?
20. Is your spiritual life closest to the example of Peter before the crucifixion, after the crucifixion, or after Pentecost? Or, do none of those experiences represent you?
21. It is our privilege to live lives in harmony with the Holy Spirit's power. We can have lives that demonstrate revival, reformation, and obedience to God's will. Are we doing it?

One of the attendees at an evangelistic meeting visited the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the very first time. A few days later she commented to the evangelist that, although she believed the new truths she was learning at the evangelistic meetings, she would not be returning to church. When he asked why, she said something like this: “Well, you see, pastor, in our church the Holy Spirit is poured out each week. People speak in tongues. They have visions, and they prophesy. I want to see and feel the power of the Holy Spirit in action, and I did not see it here.”

This lady was certainly right to expect to attend a Spirit-filled service, but her perception of the ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself was certainly mistaken. In this week’s lesson, we will focus especially on how the Holy Spirit is revealed in a changed life. The power of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily revealed in signs and spectacular wonders. It is always revealed in hearts that seek to do God’s will. (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* p. 61)

22. Most Christians will verbally express a willingness to be guided by the Holy Spirit. As you look around you in the church, do you see that happening in the lives of many of your fellow Christians?
23. If Jesus was willing to set aside His divinity and come down to live the very challenging kind of life which He lived here on this earth—a life of service to all around Him and finally die the death of a common criminal—what should be our response? If we want to live Christ-like lives, do we need to be humbly willing to do God’s will? Jesus descended from the very heights of heaven to become a human being, to become a servant of others, and finally, to die that awful death. He did this so that we could ascend from the depths of despair to the heights of heaven.
24. So, what have we learned about living the Spirit-filled life from the examples of Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus? Do you feel more or less capable of living that kind of life?

Dave and Jane claimed to be committed Christians. They attended church weekly, offered a short prayer at meals, and occasionally prayed together, but something was missing in their lives. Their marriage was in deep trouble. Arguments often punctuated their discussions. The latest TV programs captivated their interest, and it seemed boring to read the Bible and pray. Through a series of unusual circumstances, they became part of a small Bible-study group. Gradually, they developed a hunger for God’s Word. Over time, significant changes took place in their lives. The things about which they once so fiercely argued seemed to make little difference. Prayer and Bible study became precious times of fellowship with God. There was a dramatic change in their thinking. The motto of their lives became, “Jesus, the desire of my heart is to please You.”

This is the result of true spiritual revival. When our hearts are renewed by His grace and our minds are saturated with His Word, we long to please Jesus by living godly, obedient lives. (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* p. 63,64)

25. Have we experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Is the Holy Spirit active in our lives on a daily basis? Are there some areas of our lives which we are not willing to surrender to Jesus? What could possibly be holding us back?

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