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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (ISSN 8750-1988) (Standard Edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193, U.S.A. One-year subscription in U.S.A., \$6.75; single copy, \$3.95. One-year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$9.75; single copy, \$3.95. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage at Nampa, Idaho. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Lessons (Standard Edition), P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707-1000. Printed in the United States of America.

Editions in Braille available. Easy English Edition available.

Copyright © 1995 by the Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, USA.

Adult Sabbath School Lessons (ISSN 8750-1988)/No. 401/July-September 1995.

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Department of Church Ministries,
General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists,
12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, USA.
The preparation of the lessons is under
the general direction of a worldwide
Sabbath School Lesson Committee,
the members of which serve as
consulting editors. The published lesson
quarterly reflects the input of the
committee and thus does not
solely or necessarily represent
the intent of the authors.

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Contents

Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



Erwin R. Gane is the editor of the adult Sabbath School lessons. While Dr. Gane has pastored several churches on two continents, most of his service has been in the field of education. He taught at Avondale College in his native Australia and at Union and Pacific Union Colleges in the United States. He received his M.A., M.Div., and M.Th. degrees from Andrews University and a Ph.D. degree in Reformation studies. He has written four books: *Heaven's Open Door* (a study of the seven seals of Revelation), *The Battle for Freedom* (a study of the book of Galatians), *This We Believe* (a study of the 27 fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists; coauthored by Leo Van Dolson), and *Enlightened by the Spirit* (the companion book for this series of lessons). Dr. Gane and his wife, Winsome, have two grown sons.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School lessons—*Enlightened by the Spirit*.



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Introduction

Enlightened by the Spirit

This quarter's Bible study focuses on the Holy Spirit's work in people's lives throughout history, with special emphasis upon the spiritual enlightenment and power He provides God's remnant people in the end time. Bible prophets foresaw the time when, through an unprecedented manifestation of the Spirit's power, the good news of Christ's saving righteousness would be heralded to all the world. The mighty "latter rain" outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days will prepare the hearts of believers to meet their Lord and will empower their endeavors to win others to Christ.

So that we can enter into fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we need to be informed about who He is. The Bible has little to say about His nature, but the facts of His personality and place in the Godhead are fundamental to an understanding of His work.

In every age, the Holy Spirit has called fallen human beings from sin to holiness, from rejection of God to friendship and fellowship with Him, from being slaves of natural impulses, selfish desires and ambitions, to purity of mind and humble service for others. The work of the Holy Spirit before Christ's time was fundamentally what it is today, with the difference that, because of the cross, the Spirit is now the personal representative of Christ. He now works with greater intensity as He bestows special spiritual gifts upon Christian believers.

The "former (or early) rain" and the "latter rain" refer to the outpourings of the Spirit at the beginning and end of the gospel age. God planned the specific time for the former rain to occur, and He knows exactly when He will bestow the latter rain. But God's timing of these and other events in salvation history is related to His foreknowledge of the spiritual condition of the world and the church prior to the occurrence of the events. God does not determine salvation history independently of His awareness of His people's spiritual preparedness.

Hence, it is true to say that the latter rain will occur only when God's people are experiencing the fullness of former-rain blessings. To each believer today, these blessings come in the new-birth experience. As the new-birth relationship with Christ is maintained, the believer is progressively molded for reception of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. When, through the Spirit's power, we have settled fellowship with Christ, which empowers victory over sin, the historical event will occur. Believers do not produce the latter rain; it is God's gift to be given at a time He has decided for those whom He has foreseen will be ready for the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Who Is the Holy Spirit?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 14:15-26; 1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 9:14; Deut. 6:4.

MEMORY TEXT: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

KEY THOUGHT: The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian believer is the presence of the Deity.

JESUS WAS FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. When Jesus approached the Jordan to be baptized, John recognized nobility and purity. Christ's very presence radiated holiness, compassion, and divine love. Of course, Jesus was God, as well as man. But this Man, who had accepted the limitations common to humanity, constantly opened His life to be filled with the Holy Spirit. After He was baptized by John, Jesus came forth from the water to be greeted by the Holy Spirit, descending in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father acknowledging Him as His beloved Son (Matt. 3:16, 17).

Without saying who the Holy Spirit is, Luke records that He was the source of Jesus' spiritual power. Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus carried on a ministry of teaching and healing (Acts 10:38). It is impossible to separate the mighty works of Jesus from those of the Holy Spirit. Whoever He is, we cannot emulate Jesus' life of unselfish ministry without the Holy Spirit in our hearts. But who is He?

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS INFINITE INTELLECT (John 14:26).

Even though it is impossible for a human being to understand fully the Holy Spirit's nature, enough is revealed in Scripture for us to be sure that He is not merely God's influence, but a person.

What do the following passages reveal about the intellectual ability of the Holy Spirit?

Neh. 9:20 _____

Luke 12:12 _____

John 14:26 _____

1 Cor. 2:11-13 _____

The name "Counselor" (John 14:26, NIV), or "Comforter" (KJV) translates the Greek word *parakletos* (paraclete). This word is composed of the preposition *para*, meaning "beside" and the adjective *kletos*, meaning "called," or "one called." Hence the literal meaning of *parakletos* is "one called to the side of." The Latin translators often rendered it by "advocatus" (advocate). But the words *Advocate* and *Comforter* do not fully describe the Holy Spirit's work. He is the "Helper," the One who is called to our aid, summoned to our side.

To be able to *teach* all things (John 14:26), our Helper, the Holy Spirit, must *know* all things. Knowledge and the capacity to impart it are characteristic of persons.

Many other passages of Scripture speak of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example: Ps. 143:10; Eph. 3:5; 1 John 5:6; Rev. 2:7.

What pronoun is used in John 16:13 to refer to the Holy Spirit?

Although the gender of the word translated "Spirit" is neuter, the Greek masculine personal pronoun is used to refer to Him. Even though He does not possess gender in the human sense, the Holy Spirit is not "it," but "He." When we speak about Him or to Him we must remember that He is a Person, not merely an influence. (See John 15:26.)

As you approach the study of the Bible, how can you be sure you are being taught by the Holy Spirit?

THE HOLY SPIRIT FEELS, WILLS, AND ACTS (1 Cor. 12:11).

Three principal evidences of personality are intellect, will, and emotion. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit has infinite intellect.

What evidence is there in Scripture that the Holy Spirit experiences deep emotion? Isa. 63:10.

Few passages in the Bible reveal more poignantly the intensity of God's love for His wayward people than does Isaiah 63:9: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old" (RSV). Considering their long years of apostasy, it is amazing to us that, in His unflinching love, God entered into the sufferings of His people and intervened to save them from the consequences of their waywardness. "But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit." Divine compassion was met by human ingratitude. God had no choice: "He turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them" (verse 10, RSV).

It was the Holy Spirit who was grieved; it was He who became Israel's "enemy." The Holy Spirit is a person capable of infinite love and suffering. No human can understand His grief at human waywardness.

How can we grieve the Holy Spirit? Eph. 4:25-32.

Consider the sins listed in the passage. Thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds that are contrary to God's will are bound to grieve the Holy Spirit. But why should we grieve the One who has "sealed" us "for the day of redemption"? Such love deserves gratitude, which creates in us willingness to walk in Christ's way.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit exercise His will? 1 Cor. 12:11; Acts 16:6, 7.

Only a Person with a powerful will is able to "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8, NIV). Only the Holy Spirit can choose to bestow spiritual gifts on believing Christians; only He can direct our witnessing efforts.

"We are carrying the last message of mercy to a perishing world. . . . We can do this only by the aid of the Holy Spirit. —*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 313.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS (Heb. 9:14).

What characteristics and activities of God are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the following passages?

Heb. 9:14 _____

Gen 1:2; Job 33:4 _____

Rom. 8:11 _____

Gal. 6:8 _____

The Holy Spirit is God, equal in authority and power with the Father and Christ. As do the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit performs a distinctive function in the salvation of the human family. "The eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14) cooperated with the Father and the Son in the creation of our world (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit inspired the messages written by Bible prophets (1 Peter 1:10, 11; 2 Peter 1:21). Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20). The Holy Spirit empowered Christ's ministry (Luke 4:18), was involved in raising Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11), and worked miracles through His apostles (Rom. 15:19). The Holy Spirit gives eternal life to those who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord (Gal. 6:8). Thus the Holy Spirit shares the omnipotence of the Father and Christ.

What other divine characteristics does the Holy Spirit possess? 1 Cor. 2:10, 11; John 14:26; Ps. 139:7-12.

Because He shares the thoughts of the Father, the Holy Spirit knows all things; He is omniscient. The mysteries that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard" (1 Cor. 2:9, RSV), "God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (verse 10, RSV). The explanations of divine mysteries are not all reserved until we reach the heavenly kingdom. Some of them are available now through the teaching ministry of the all-knowing Holy Spirit, who shares God's thoughts (verse 11). Through Him we "understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" (verse 12, RSV), and we impart His truth to others (verse 13). Through the Spirit "we have the mind of Christ" (verse 16, RSV).

The all-knowing, all-seeing, all-loving Holy Spirit is everywhere present (omnipresent). There is no place on earth where we can escape His convicting ministry (Ps. 139:7-12). And there is no place from which His supportive, comforting presence can be excluded.

THE HOLY SPIRIT REPRESENTS THE FATHER AND THE SON (John 14:15-18, 23).

With whom do the following passages identify the Holy Spirit?

2 Sam. 23:2, 3 _____

Ezek. 8:1, 3 _____

2 Peter 1:21; compare with 2 Tim. 3:16 _____

Significantly, the God of the Old Testament (Jehovah or, more accurately, *Yahweh*) includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Isaiah refers to a voice that cries, "in the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD [*Yahweh*], make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa. 40:3, RSV). Centuries later, Matthew mentioned the Baptist's preparation for Christ's ministry. "The Lord" and "our God" in Isaiah refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, for whose ministry John prepared. (See Matt. 3:1-3.)

Similarly, "the Spirit of the LORD [*Yahweh*]" is "the God of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:2, 3), and "the Lord God" is the "Spirit" (Ezek. 8:1, 3). The Holy Spirit, as does Christ, embodies "the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9).

"The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and is invisible to mortal sight. The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. . . . The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Saviour."—*Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615.

How did Jesus demonstrate the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? John 14:16-18, 23.

The magnificent truth is that when the Spirit comes to live within us, Jesus and the Father come to us. The infinitely mysterious union between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the supreme God of the universe to live within every believing Christian.

Are you conscious of the presence of the Father and Christ in your life because you have the Spirit? How is this consciousness acquired?

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD (Deut. 6:4).

Because the Bible presents the Deity as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, some readers might assume that there are three Gods. Such teaching is polytheism. By contrast, the Bible teaches monotheism—three Persons in *one* God. Our limited human insight renders it impossible for us to understand this divine mystery. Yet the Bible message is clear: the union between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is so infinitely close that there is only one God.

Note the teaching of the following Bible passages:

Deut. 6:4 _____

Ps. 83:18 _____

Isa. 43:10, 11 _____

1 Cor. 8:4 _____

Eph. 4:5, 6 _____

“Nature testifies that One infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy, and love, created the earth and filled it with life and gladness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 256.

There is only one Creator (Mal. 2:10). But to whom does the Bible credit the work of Creation? Gen. 1:1, 2; John 1:1-3; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30.

“All things were created by the Son of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 281.

“Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning ‘was brooding upon the face of the waters’; of that Word by whom ‘all things were made’; of that ‘true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,’ can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted. Only by their guidance can its deepest truths be discerned.

“Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him.”—*Education*, p. 134.

What is the significance of the fact that there is only one God for the ministries of Christ and the Holy Spirit? Compare John 14:9-11 with verses 18, 23, 26 and 16:13-15.

FURTHER STUDY: The activities of the Holy Spirit indicate personality and deity. Study the following: He hears (John 16:13); He speaks (Matt. 10:20); He convicts (John 16:8); He imparts love (Rom. 5:5); He imparts special skills (Exod. 31:3); He encourages (Acts 9:31); He transforms (2 Cor. 3:18); He consecrates for special ministry (1 Sam. 10:6, 10); He leads (Rom. 8:14).

On the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit, study 2 Cor. 3:18. The last phrase in the verse translates: "the Lord, the Spirit." Compare Acts 5:3, 4, which identifies the Holy Spirit with God.

"The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. . . .

"We are to cooperate with the three highest powers in heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and these powers will work through us, making us workers together with God."—*Evangelism*, p. 617.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A religious worker comes to your door and states his belief that Christ was brought into existence by the Father and that the Holy Spirit is God's influence. How would you react? What Bible passages would you use in an attempt to convince the visitor of the true Bible teaching on these questions?
2. You discover that a work associate's objection to Christianity is her confusion regarding how Christ can live in heaven and also live in the hearts of believers on earth. How can you help her?
3. Why is it important not to make too sharp a distinction between the saving ministry of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit? Even though their roles in the salvation process are distinct, in what ways are their roles similar or identical?

SUMMARY: The Holy Spirit is a divine person. As God, He is equal in authority and power with the Father and Christ. Even so, there is only *one* God. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the presence of the Father and the Son. Thus we have the God of the universe as our constant friend, protector, and guide.



Angels in the Andes, part 1

Wellesley Muir

Vicente Diaz never dreamed that his name would be on a hit list of the Shining Path guerrilla terrorists in Peru. He operated a small business in a quiet village high in the Andes mountains.

One Saturday night while turning the dial on his shortwave radio, Vicente found a religious broadcast. As he paused to listen, the message of Jesus, who died to save sinners, burned into his heart. For two years his family huddled around the radio every Saturday night and listened. They sent for Bible-study lessons and eagerly learned new truths. Eventually they contacted the Lake Titicaca Mission, and requested baptism.

After their baptism Vicente told his family, "We are the only Christians in this village. God wants us to teach others the gospel." The family knelt together on the cold dirt floor of their little home as Vicente prayed. "Dear Jesus, make me Your messenger. Help me to share Your Word with all of the Quechuas [Indians] around Santa Rosa."

Life for many Quechuas included chewing coca leaves, which contain cocaine, and drinking alcohol. During frequent fiestas drunken men would be led home by a wife or child. Vicente took his Bible and the lessons he had studied and set out to tell others of a better way. Through his missionary work, dozens of Quechuas were transformed and united their lives with Christ in baptism.

Soon Vicente felt impressed to conduct evangelistic meetings in his hometown. Enemies of the gospel denounced him, and he was called before the local judge. "You are guilty of bringing false religion to our city," the judge accused. "You must leave town within five hours. If you fail to do this, we will put you in prison and confiscate your house and personal belongings."

Faced with these options, Vicente took his family, his horse, and all the belongings they could carry and journeyed to a distant village. They found lodging in the home of an old friend. There Vicente rented the city hall in the nearby town and began preaching. Although the mayor strongly opposed him, 45 people accepted Jesus and were baptized.

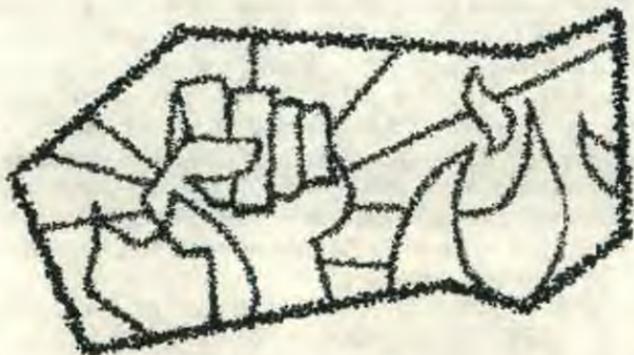


Wellesley Muir is the pastor of the Yosemite Valley Church in California. Previously he served as president of the Lake Titicaca Mission.

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Empowered by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 3:5, 36; 16:8-11; Rom. 7:1-8:10; 1 John 3:3-10; Micah 7:18.

MEMORY TEXT: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:8, 9).

KEY THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit convicts of sin because He wants sinners to believe in Christ. By believing we can have the gifts of justification, eternal life, Christ's character, and victory over sin.

THE SPIRIT'S CALL FROM SIN, responded to positively, results in great spiritual victory. One day in 1849 in the little town of Barnsley, England, a young man walked into his father's library, selected a tract that caught his eye, and began to read. He was alone at home, lonely, and discouraged with his efforts to be a Christian.

As the young man read, his mother, who was visiting relatives 70 miles away, rose from the dinner table with an intense longing for the conversion of her son. She went to her room and remained in prayer until she felt constrained to praise God for the successful work of the Holy Spirit in her son's life.

This young man, Hudson Taylor, gave his heart to Christ and became a missionary to China. He founded the China Inland Mission and planted the gospel in the hearts of thousands.

Those who respond to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit become radiant ambassadors for Christ.

THE CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 16:8-11).

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit's convicting work? John 16:8, 9; Acts 2:37-39.

The Greek word translated "reprove" (John 16:8, KJV) means "to bring to light, expose, convict, correct, punish, discipline." When the Holy Spirit reveals to our minds the seriousness of our sins, we feel guilty. The resulting spiritual and emotional hurt is a form of discipline that obliges us either to admit our sin and seek forgiveness or to ignore it and drive the Holy Spirit from us.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin "because they do not believe in me" (John 16:9, RSV). God's primary purpose is not to destroy sinners' peace of mind, but to awaken them to their need of faith in Jesus. The most appropriate response to the Spirit's conviction is that of the people who heard Peter's great sermon on the day of Pentecost. "What shall we do?" followed by genuine confession and repentance, always results in "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38, RSV). Then He empowers, enables, strengthens, and inspires.

Why does the Holy Spirit carry the responsibility of convicting or convincing "in regard to righteousness" (NIV)? John 16:10 (compare Isa. 11:5; 59:15, 16; John 8:46).

Jesus' answer to the question above was enlightening: "I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer" (John 16:10, NIV). Jesus is righteous, pure, holy, free from sin. While He was on earth, His followers had a living example of perfect righteousness. They could see for themselves the beauty and value of righteousness. When Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit assumed the task of convincing sinful humanity of Jesus' righteousness and their need of receiving it. This is the great message that is to span the earth.

Concerning what event does the Holy Spirit bring conviction? Why? John 16:11; 1 John 4:13-17.

Jesus warned of the coming judgment (Matt. 5:21, 22; 22:11-14). The Holy Spirit repeats Christ's warnings, reminding sinners that only the person in whose heart Christ is dwelling will be acquitted.

POWER OVER THE DEMANDS OF FALLEN NATURE (Rom. 7:1-8:10).

In Romans 7:1-6, who is represented by the first husband? Who is represented by the second husband? What is the role of the law? Compare Rom. 6:8-11; 7:7-14.

Paul is contrasting life lived apart from Christ with life lived in fellowship with Christ. At any stage of our existence, before or after initial conversion, it is possible for us to attempt to live apart from Christ. Then the natural tendencies of our fallen natures take control of our thoughts, words, and actions, and we are "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14; compare 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:17, 18).

"The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ."—*Education*, p. 29.

When we live apart from Christ, how successful are we in the battle with the inclinations of our fallen natures? Rom. 7:15-24. How may we have victory over these inclinations? How may this victory be perpetuated? Rom. 7:25-8:10.

"Nothing good dwells within me" (Rom. 7:18, RSV). "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (verse 23).

"Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life. . . . Fear to trust to your own strength, fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and [to] attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 161.

Notice: (1) In fellowship with Christ, we are no longer condemned by the law (Rom. 8:1). We have the *assurance* of present salvation in Christ. (2) The Spirit of Christ sets us free from control by our fallen natures (Rom. 8:2-4). (3) By constantly allowing the Spirit to reign in our hearts, we have "life and peace" (verse 6) and the righteousness of Christ (verse 10). We live "according to the Spirit" (RSV) by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (verses 4-6).

Can you testify to the Spirit's power in overcoming the demands of your fallen nature?

POWER OVER ACTS OF SIN (1 John 3:3-10).

How can sinful behavior be overcome? Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 4:27-32.

Living "according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:12, RSV) is living apart from Christ, allowing our fallen natures to control us. "But if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" (verse 13, RSV). The deeds of the body are thoughts, words, and actions that are dictated by our fallen natures. These can be overcome only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul lists the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21), evil deeds that we commit when we allow our fallen natures to control. By contrast, the Holy Spirit reigning in our hearts produces works ("fruit," verse 22, RSV) that are pure and pleasing to God.

Study passages in 1 John that tell of the importance and the means of overcoming sin. 1 John 2:1; 3:3-10; 5:2-5, 18.

The Greek of 1 John 2:1 commands that we do not sin at all—that we do not commit an act of sin (in thought, feeling, word, or act). How thankful we are that, when we do sin, we have Jesus as our Advocate.

First John 3:3-10 does not teach that habitual sin is wrong while occasional sin is acceptable. (See comment no. 1 in "Further Study" section.) Jesus, our Example, was pure (verse 3); He did not commit habitual sin, or even one sin (verse 5). "Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness" (verse 4, RSV), because all sin, whether one sin or habitual sin, is lawlessness. Any sin is of the devil (verse 8).

Nor does 1 John 3:3-10 teach that it is impossible for a born-again Christian to choose sin. The passage means that **as long as we permit the Holy Spirit to reign in our hearts and control our minds, we are kept from sinning.**

"No one born of God commits sin" (verse 9, RSV) simply means that believers who maintain fellowship with Christ are kept from sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit. The message is reiterated in 1 John 5:5, 18. The believer in Christ born of the Spirit "does not sin" ("the evil one does not touch [overcome] him," verse 18, RSV) because his or her born-again fellowship with the Spirit is maintained. "He who was born of God [Jesus] keeps him" (1 John 5:18, RSV).

GOD'S MERCY FOR THE SINNER (Micah 7:18).

If we fall into sin, what assurance do we have that we can be restored to fellowship with Jesus and His Spirit? Micah 7:18 (compare Acts 5:31; 13:38, 39; Eph. 1:7).

The Lord does not forsake us when we fall; He continues to love us, to regard us as His children, and He works to give us victory over our sinful inclinations. "There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, 'These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' 1 John 2:1."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

Do these encouraging words mean that we are right with God if we continue in sin? Isa. 59:2 (compare James 1:14, 15; Rom. 6:23; Ps. 66:18).

The essence of sin is broken fellowship with God. The fact that God immediately forgives our sin when we ask Him, and restores us to fellowship with Himself, does not imply that we remain in a saved relationship with Him if we do not repent. (See comment no. 2 in "Further Study.")

"One sin unrepented of is enough to close the gates of heaven against you. It was because man could not be saved with one stain of sin upon him, that Jesus came to die on Calvary's cross. Your only hope is to look to Christ and live."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 17, 1890.

"'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation and provokes the divine displeasure."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 623.

We are not held blameworthy of sins committed ignorantly until we are aware that we have sinned. (See Lev. 4:27, 28.) Nor is God's forgiveness dependent on our memory. Repentance is turning to God in total acceptance of His loving offer of forgiveness.

THE HOLY SPIRIT QUALIFIES BELIEVERS FOR ETERNAL LIFE (John 3:5, 36).

To whom is eternal life given? When is it given? John 3:5, 36; 5:24; 1 John 5:12, 13.

We are mortal beings even after receiving the gift of eternal life. If time lasts, we will die. Paul explained that "at the last trump . . . this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:52, 53), that is, at the second coming of Jesus. Then, in what sense can it be said that we have the gift of eternal life now?

The Bible explanation is simple. Death for the believer is a temporary sleep. The first death is not the end. God gives believers eternal life now, promising that when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16). They die in possession of the gift of eternal life. While they are sleeping, their Saviour cherishes His purpose of raising them at His coming. Then they rise to realize the fullness of Christ's gift, to be immortal beings for eternity.

What continuing experience ensures that we retain the gift of eternal life during our earthly sojourn? Rom. 8:9-17.

The gift of the Holy Spirit to our hearts when we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour is the gift of His presence, His righteousness, His life—eternal life. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11, RSV). This has two meanings:

(1) The Holy Spirit gives new life now to believers who accept Him into their hearts.

(2) The Holy Spirit will give immortal life to believers of all ages at the second coming of Jesus. Believers are sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:14), heirs of the heavenly kingdom (verse 17).

"Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of life eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

FURTHER STUDY: To learn more about the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, study: John 17:22-26; John 14:15, 16; 1 Peter 1:2; Rom. 8:2-4.

NOTES FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Some scholars reason that, because the verbs referring to sin used in 1 John 3:3-10 are present tense, they refer to habitual sinning. They explain that the present tense in Greek specifies continuing or habitual action, not a one-time action. Verse 6 means that no one who abides in Him sins *habitually*, or as a way of life. Verse 8 means that the person who commits *habitual* sin is of the devil. Verse 9 means that no one born of God sins *habitually*.

But the Greek present tense does not always refer to continuous or habitual action. "The aoristic present presents the action as a simple event or as a present fact without any reference to its progress."—James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), p. 81. The authors cite the use of verbs in the present that specify single events: Acts 16:18, "I command you"; Mark 2:5, "Your sins are forgiven."

Even a single sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4); the person truly *abiding* in Him does not commit lawlessness (verse 6); any sin is of the devil (verse 8); and, when God's Spirit controls the hearts and minds of believers, they have the power not to give in to temptation (verse 9).

Through the power of Christ's Spirit, they are able to fulfill the requirements of God's law. (See Rom. 8:3, 4; Phil. 4:13. See Ellen White's discussion of 1 John 3 in *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 297.)

2. If a person commits a sin and dies before confessing, is that person saved or lost? Ellen White comments: "As long as there is hope, until they resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, men are guarded by heavenly intelligences."—*Our High Calling*, p. 23. "God bears long with the perversity of men, giving them ample opportunity for repentance."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 123.

Just as true Christians live in an attitude of prayer, so they may also live in an attitude of repentance. Their love for Christ causes them to repent immediately as Peter did when Jesus looked at him (Luke 22:61). Verbal repentance is important, but Jesus reads the heart.

SUMMARY: Not only does the Holy Spirit convict of sin, He also empowers the believer in Christ to overcome. The tendencies of fallen nature and acts of sin can be overcome through total dependence on Christ in continuing fellowship with Him.



Angels in the Andes, part 2

Wellesley Muir

When a judge ordered Vicente Diaz to leave town within five hours, Vicente and his family took all they could carry and journeyed high into the mountains of Peru. There they stayed with a friend, while Vicente rented a hall and began preaching his beloved message of Christ. Soon 45 new believers were baptized.

The new Christians needed a church. One family gave land; others bought bricks, stone, wood, metal roofing, doors, and windows. Soon a new church was dedicated with 118 members.

Vicente and Ismael Kala, a new member, worked hard, unaware that their Christian activities had put their lives in danger. The Shining Path guerrillas had singled them and three engineers out for execution "for creating division among the local people."

The guerrillas attacked the vehicle carrying the engineers, and held them prisoner while they drove to the church where they knew Vicente and Ismael would be that evening. They parked the vehicle nearby and waited to attack. At 7:30 four guerrilla soldiers slipped into the church through the gate. Suddenly they stopped. They found 30 armed soldiers walking around the patio; standing at the church entrance, and sitting in the back of the church.

The guerrillas panicked and raced toward the waiting vehicle, shouting, "Let's get out of here! They have army soldiers!"

The guerrillas drove to a lonely spot and parked the vehicle. They killed the engineers, then fled into the night.

Later a woman asked church members, "Where did the soldiers come from? How long have they been guarding your church?"

Church members responded, puzzled, "No soldiers guard our church." The woman told the Christians what the guerrillas saw the evening they came to capture and kill Vicente and Ismael.

"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Ps. 34:7, NKJV), they answered her.

Vicente Diaz is grateful that a radio program brought the gospel message to him and his family, and to thousands like him who want to learn of Jesus.



In spite of continuing guerrilla activities in Peru, 3,000 believers were baptized last July in the Lake Titicaca Mission.

Wellesley Muir is the pastor of the Yosemite Valley Church in California. Previously he served as president of the Lake Titicaca Mission.

The Holy Spirit's Call to Fellowship and Service



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 10:25-37; Acts 2:38-47; 20:17-35; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 7.

MEMORY TEXT: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Fellowship with Christ and with other believers is made possible by fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

THOSE IN NEED ARE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. The famous English preacher Charles Spurgeon found a boy on the street who was ragged and hungry. The compassionate pastor gave him a good meal and some new clothes, and then prayed with him. Several times in his prayer Mr. Spurgeon referred to God as "Our Father." The boy asked, "Did you say 'Our Father'?" Spurgeon replied, "Yes, my boy, yours and mine." "Then we are brothers," the boy responded. "That's right," Spurgeon said, and he talked to him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he gave the boy a letter to a certain shoemaker for a new pair of shoes.

A few days later the shoemaker said to Spurgeon, "The other day a boy came into the shop and asked for a pair of shoes, saying that his brother had sent him, and when I asked him who his brother was, he said you were." "That's right," said Spurgeon, "and he is your brother, too, and if you like, we will share the cost of the shoes."

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (2 Cor. 13:14).

What three divine gifts did Paul wish every believer to enjoy continually? 2 Cor. 13:14.

The "grace of Christ" is His unbounded love for us, the means of saving us from sin (Eph. 2:6-10), and the power He imparts, enabling us to live for Him (1 Cor. 1:4-8). Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), made possible by His grace (verse 4), enriches us, so that we "do not lack any spiritual gift" (verse 7, NIV). He keeps us "strong to the end," so that we "will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 8, NIV).

The "love of God" (2 Cor. 13:14) is the very basis of our Christian hope (John 3:16).

"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14) is the means by which the Father and Christ commune with our hearts and minds. The Greek word translated "communion" (*koinonia*: 2 Cor. 13:14, KJV) means "fellowship, association, close relationship, communication, participation, sharing." The word is used in these different ways in the New Testament. The beautiful truth is that the Father and the Son communicate with us through the Holy Spirit. We enjoy fellowship with the Deity through His divine indwelling in our hearts. (See John 14:18, 23.)

What does the "communion," "communication," or "fellowship" of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) do for those who experience it? Eph. 3:9-21.

As you study the passage, answer the following questions (where possible, consult a number of translations):

Eph. 3:9: What is the "mystery" that was hidden but is now known? (Compare Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:9; Col. 1:27.)

Verse 16: How is this mystery made known to us? (Compare verses 7-10.)

Verse 16, 17: When we have faith, how does Christ dwell in our hearts?

Verses 18-20: What amazing blessings does the indwelling Holy Spirit impart to us?

Ask yourself: What unclaimed blessings available to me by fellowship with the Holy Spirit can I claim today?

FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS (1 John 1:3, 7).

How does fellowship with the Holy Spirit influence our relationships with others? Phil. 2:1-5.

The Greek word translated "fellowship" in Philippians 2:1 (KJV) is the same word translated "communion" in 2 Corinthians 13:14 (KJV).

The message of Philippians 2:1-5 is that union with Christ and fellowship with the Spirit produces dramatic results in our attitudes toward other believers. We become one in love, in mind, in spirit, and in purpose (verse 2). The presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts draws us to one another in a unity of mutual respect, fellowship, and outreach to others. The Spirit imparts genuine humility (verse 3). In place of selfish ambition, the desire for position, honor, and recognition, the Spirit implants in our hearts loving respect for others. We humbly and joyfully acknowledge that they have talents that we do not; that, although we have a valuable contribution to make for the Lord, the gifts of our brothers and sisters are essential for the church, and, in many cases, may be superior to ours. The concerns and well-being of our brothers, sisters, and neighbors become more important than our own (verse 4).

The New International Version translates Philippians 2:5, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." He left His exalted position in heaven, became a human being, and subjected Himself to the humiliation of the cross (verses 5-8). The Spirit seeks to make us like Jesus.

What two motives should we have as we present the gospel to others? 1 John 1:3, 7.

The Holy Spirit never motivates us to neglect others. A young man with long hair and shabby clothes walked into the lobby of a church, looking very shy but obviously curious to find out more about Christianity. A woman looked at him disdainfully and remarked, "You're not coming in here looking like that, are you?" He left and never returned. (See James 2:1-7.)

Concern for the happiness of others and willingness to fellowship with them so that they can have fellowship with God are motivated by the inspiring presence of the Spirit.

How would prayer for the Spirit's fellowship improve the fellowship among members of your church?

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHURCH LEADERS (Acts 20:17-35).

The New Testament church, led by apostles, evangelists, and pastors, was held together in united fellowship by the bonding work of the Holy Spirit. Divine counsel is offered to both leaders and church members regarding unity in the Spirit.

Study Paul's practice of church leadership, outlined in Acts 20:17-35. Compare Peter's counsel in 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Observe the following features of Paul's ministry and his instruction regarding leadership:

Acts 20:19: Despite persecution, he humbly served the Lord.

Verses 20, 27, 31: He taught the people faithfully and did not shrink from house-to-house visitation.

Verse 21: The message was the gospel of salvation.

Verse 24: His gospel ministry was more important to him than his own life.

Verse 28: The Holy Spirit appoints leaders.

Verse 32: The church leader is entirely dependent upon God's grace for holiness and spiritual growth.

Verses 33-35: Paul worked with his own hands to support his ministry and to relieve the necessities of others.

"The minister who has a due appreciation of service, regards himself as God's minuteman. . . . His work is to follow Christ, to be a willing agent and co-worker with the Master, receiving His Spirit day by day, and working as the Saviour worked, neither failing nor being discouraged."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 451.

What will Spirit-filled believers do to support and maintain enriching fellowship with their leaders?

Rom. 15:30-33 _____

Phil. 2:25, 29, 30 _____

1 Thess. 5:12, 13 _____

1 Tim. 5:17-22 _____

The Holy Spirit inspired the churches to support Paul, praying for his ministry and accepting his fellow workers. One means of fostering the unity of the Spirit in the church is to support and encourage faithful servant-leaders.

SERVICE MOTIVATED BY THE SPIRIT (Acts 2:38-47).

What kind of service was performed by the new believers who received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? Acts 2:38-47 (compare Acts 4:31-37).

“When the grace of Christ is expressed in the words and works of the believers, light will shine forth to those who are in darkness; for while the lips are speaking to the praise of God, the hand will be stretched out in beneficence for the help of the perishing. We read that on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, no man said that aught that he possessed was his own. All they owned was held for the advance of the wonderful reformation. And thousands were converted in a day. When the same spirit actuates believers today, and they give back to God of His own with the same liberality, a wide and far-reaching work will be accomplished.”—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 271.

The book of Acts could be entitled “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” Note how the Spirit directed the service of early Christian believers:

Acts 6:3, 5, 10 _____

Acts 8:29, 39 _____

Acts 9:31 _____

Acts 13:2, 4 _____

Acts 16:6-10 _____

The Holy Spirit directed the apostolic church in the selection of their leaders and in commissioning them to specific kinds of ministry and service. Church members, filled with the Spirit, used their distinctive spiritual gifts by cooperating with the apostles in evangelistic outreach.

“Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do.”—*Christian Service*, p. 68.

EVERY BELIEVER A GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:25-37).

What does being a good Samaritan (Luke 10:36, 37) have to do with inheriting eternal life?

The lawyer's question concerned the qualification for eternal life. When Jesus prompted him to answer his own question, the lawyer quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus responded, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live" (Luke 10:28, RSV). In other words, you will have eternal life if you love God and your neighbor. But loving God and our neighbors involves more than words and making a profession; it involves works. Are we to assume, therefore, that our good works have something to do with our salvation?

The Bible teaches that salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 6:8) to those who have faith (Eph. 2:8-10). But it also teaches that *living* faith always manifests itself in works inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. (See James 2:14-26.) Just as good works demonstrate the living vitality of a person's faith, so the absence of good works demonstrates that professed faith is barren and dead.

This is why Jesus will ultimately judge as worthy of eternal life those who render practical service to those in need (Matt. 25:34-39). Jesus will commend the truly faithful by saying, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (verse 40, RSV). But He will deny the gift of eternal life to those who only professed to be Spirit-filled Christians, yet who ignored the tragic sufferings of their fellow human beings.

Why can John's commands to love fellow believers be applied to love for all humanity? 1 John 2:9-11; 3:11, 15-18, 23, 24; 4:7-13 (compare Deut. 10:19; Matt. 22:39).

John links the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers with their love for others (1 John 3:23, 24), whom he identifies as "brothers." But, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors also. Our brother, sister, or neighbor is anyone in need, regardless of color, class, creed, wealth, or education.

"In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 487.

FURTHER STUDY: Fellowship with the Holy Spirit results in communicating our faith to others and giving of ourselves and our means to support God's work. Study Rom. 12:11-13; 2 Cor. 9:13, 14; Phil. 4:15-20; Philemon 1:6; Heb. 13:16.

"The followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom's home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent is it possible to have fellowship with other Christians who do not understand the teachings of God's Word as we do? In such situations, how can we apply the principles brought forth in this lesson without sacrificing our distinctive doctrinal convictions?
2. A person whom you have never met comes to your door at night, telling you that his four-year-old daughter is suffering from spinal meningitis. He says that he has been watching her all day, but that he does not have the money to buy the medicine she needs. He asks whether you can lend him twenty-five dollars so that he can go to the store and buy the medicine. Because of his manner, you have serious doubts about the truthfulness of his story. What would you do?
3. A person in your church is critical of church leadership. This person seems to be knowledgeable as to the attitudes and actions of the leaders. The criticism is affecting others and resulting in a degree of disaffection with the church. What can you do to help restore confidence and fellowship?

SUMMARY: Fellowship with the Father and Christ is possible for us as we enter into fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This fellowship with the Deity is the basis of fellowship with other believers, including church leaders. It also motivates us to reach out to help those not of our faith. Fellowship with the Spirit inspires, motivates, and enables unselfish ministry for others.



The Sabbathkeeping Sunday Church

Eugene Hsu

In Northeast China an old Sunday church with more than 100 members has met for years.

Two years ago one of the members of this church heard a radio broadcast of the *Voice of Hope*, and she became interested in the message she heard concerning the Sabbath. She began searching her Bible to verify what she heard.

While on a business trip to another city, she had to wait in the train station for her train. She opened her Bible to read. An Adventist church elder saw her reading her Bible and was impressed with her boldness. He came near and shared with her his Adventist beliefs and invited her to attend church services in the city.

The woman accepted the invitation and was impressed with the church and the truths she heard there. The message was different from what she had heard in her own church. She continued studying and eventually joined the Adventist church.

She began to witness to her friends, one at a time, about what she had learned. In less than six months many Sundaykeepers were converted and began to keep the Sabbath. In less than one year, the entire Sundaykeeping church had converted to Sabbathkeeping.

The church growth in that city went from 100 to 600 members in just one year. The old church was too small to accommodate the members, so they applied to the government for permission to build a larger facility. The government did not respond, so members built the church themselves. Within six months they had overcome all obstacles, found suitable property, and built a new church--the largest Adventist church in Northeastern China, with a seating capacity of 1,500! Some 2,500 people attended the church dedication, including believers from other parts of China who traveled to the city to celebrate the joyful occasion. The climax of the celebration was the baptism of 500 new believers.

Only in eternity will we know how many courageous men and women have stepped forward in faith and trusted in God's power to overcome insurmountable obstacles!



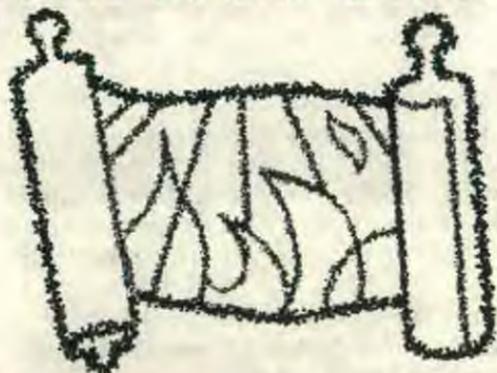
Eugene Hsu is secretary of the Eastern Asia Committee at the General Conference.

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The Holy Spirit's Ministry Prior to the Cross



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 104:30; 143:10; Gen. 6:3; Ezek. 36:26, 27; John 16:13-15.

MEMORY VERSE: "I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36:27, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Prior to the cross, the Holy Spirit directed life, order, and thought in the world; He ruled and directed God's people; He also brought conviction to, and dwelt within, human hearts. What is new in His work since the cross?

THE PROBLEM: Jesus said: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water' " (John 7:37, 38, RSV). John explained: "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (verse 39). The suggestion is that the Spirit would function after Jesus' death and resurrection in a different way from that in which He functioned before the cross. The same suggestion is contained in Jesus' statement recorded in John 16:7, 8. The Spirit would not come until Jesus departed.

The Holy Spirit functioned in a comprehensive manner before the cross, sustaining the world He had created, convicting sinners, leading God's people, and dwelling in the hearts of believers. What difference is there between the Spirit's work before and after the cross?

THE SPIRIT CREATED AND SUSTAINED (Ps. 104:30).

In addition to participation in the creation of our world, what work did the Holy Spirit do before the cross that He continues to do today? Ps. 104:29, 30; Isa. 40:12-17.

The Holy Spirit was the Divine Agent in the creative work of the Father and the Son. (See Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4.) The organizing, directing, and controlling work of the Deity is revealed through the operations of the Spirit. The great usurper, Satan, attempted to assume control of the world, but the Spirit of God retains His overriding, overruling sovereignty. He alone "has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance" (Isa. 40:12, RSV). He is the source of enlightenment, justice, and order among the nations, both prior to and since the cross.

How pervading was the Spirit's controlling, guiding, protecting presence before the cross? Ps. 139:7-12; Isa. 59:18, 19.

As He is today, the Holy Spirit before the cross was the source of life, order, movement, and spiritual thought in the world. Everywhere present at any one time, He sustains good (Ps. 143:10) and restrains and destroys evil (Isa. 40:7). The stories of the Old Testament illustrate that no human being can escape the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. When Saul sent messengers to apprehend David, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers, preventing them from fulfilling their evil purpose (1 Sam. 19:18-21). When Saul himself attempted to arrest David, the Spirit of God came upon him also, and he was thwarted (verse 23).

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19).

"It is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that God communicates with man; and those who deliberately reject this agency as satanic, have cut off the channel of communication between the soul and Heaven."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 405.

In what ways can you identify the Holy Spirit's control over humanity today? What experiences have you had of His directing presence?

THE SPIRIT CONVICTED SINNERS (Gen. 6:3).

What do the following Old Testament passages teach regarding the work of the Holy Spirit? Review the stories that form the background to these passages:

Gen. 6:3 _____

Num. 24:2 _____

Ps. 51:11 _____

Genesis 6:3 may be translated: "My Spirit will not contend with man forever" (NIV). The Lord was so repulsed by almost universal human wickedness that He regretted having created humanity (verse 6). "Every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (verse 5, NRSV). Because the conviction of the Holy Spirit was continually rejected, God decided to bring His efforts to an end (verse 7). "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (verse 8, NIV). So the Lord gave the world 120 more years to hear the convicting message of His Spirit.

Balaam's repeated efforts to curse Israel failed because "the Spirit of God came upon him" (Num. 24:1, 2). Balaam had rejected the convicting Holy Spirit, and his days ended in tragedy (Num. 31:8). After his sin of adultery, David, under deep conviction, prayed that the Holy Spirit would not be taken from him (Ps. 51:11).

The Holy Spirit was as active in convicting and drawing sinful humanity in Old Testament times as He is today. No human being can complain that the Spirit did not work sufficiently to save him or her. (See Rom. 2:11-16.)

What were the results of Israel's closing their ears to the appeals of the Holy Spirit? Isa. 30:1; 63:10.

"The warnings given in the word of God to the children of Israel were meant, not merely for them, but for all who should live upon the earth. . . . [Isa. 30:1, 2 quoted.] If the Lord reprov'd His people anciently because they neglected to seek counsel of Him when in difficulty, will He not be displeas'd today if His people, instead of depending on the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness to lighten their way, turn from Him in their test and trial for the aid of human beings who are as erring and inefficient as themselves?"—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 380, 381.

THE SPIRIT ENRICHED GOD'S PEOPLE (Ps. 143:10).

In what special ways did the Lord instruct His people in Old Testament times?

2 Sam. 23:2 _____

Neh. 9:30 _____

Ezek. 2:2, 3 _____

Zech. 7:12 _____

The convicting Spirit of God spoke directly to every human heart. "Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 377. But no people in ancient times were as blessed with spiritual, moral, and ethical truth as were the Israelites. They alone were given Heaven's revelations through the prophets. The Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament Scriptures as He later inspired the New Testament Scriptures. "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21, RSV; compare 2 Cor. 12:1-7). Repeatedly God spoke to His chosen people, not because He wanted them to have light and truth unavailable to other nations, but because He planned for them to be His witnesses.

Consider other ways in which the Holy Spirit enriched God's people before the cross:

Isa. 63:11-14 _____

Exod. 31:1-4 _____

Num. 11:24, 25 _____

Zech. 4:6-10 _____

The psalmist prayed: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (Ps. 143:10, NIV). God's Spirit constantly sought to do exactly that! He worked through Moses, through craftsmen, Israel's elders, prophets, kings, and governors.

How does the Holy Spirit work to enrich God's people today? How does the Spirit enrich your life?

THE SPIRIT DWELT IN THE HEARTS OF BELIEVERS (Ezek. 36:26, 27).

Identify the people in the following passages, and indicate how they were affected by the Spirit's presence in their hearts.

Gen. 41:38 _____

Ezek. 3:24; 11:5 _____

Dan. 4:8, 9, 18; 5:14 _____

Micah 3:8 _____

It was not only select people who were favored with the presence of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The point is that His presence was and is the source of holiness, integrity, wisdom, and spiritual power for those who emulate the commitment of the spiritual giants of Old Testament times.

God repeatedly promised His people that, if they would turn to Him with all their hearts, His Spirit would be poured out upon them. Review some of these beautiful promises. Isa. 32:14-17 (compare 31:6); 44:3; 59:21 (compare Ezek. 36:26, 27; 37:14).

These promises, and others like them, were not only for Israel; they are also for us. If Israel would fulfill their covenant promises, God would pour out His Spirit upon them, dwell in their hearts, give them individual and national prosperity, and use them to proclaim His saving love to other nations. To some extent the promises could be fulfilled, but not entirely, because of Israel's failure to respond to God's love by obedience to His will. Ultimately these promises applied to spiritual Israel, and at Pentecost they began to be fulfilled for the Christian church.

What greater evidence of God's loving intention for His people could there be than the promise of Isaiah 32:15-20? Isaiah warned of invasion, desolation, and captivity. Yet there was still hope—hope of the outpouring of the Spirit and the consequent reign of righteousness in the people's hearts.

Specifically, how would you apply the promises of Isaiah and Ezekiel to God's people today?

THE SOLUTION (John 16:13-15).

This lesson began with the problem question: What is the difference between the Spirit's work before and after the cross? We have discovered that most major elements of the Spirit's work in the New Testament are also described in the Old Testament. Why, then, did John say, "Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified"? (John 7:39, NIV).

What answer to the above question is suggested by Jesus' predictions concerning the work of the coming Holy Spirit? John 15:26; 16:13-15.

The Spirit could not be Christ's personal representative before Christ came to our world. The Spirit can now fulfill that role, repeating Christ's teaching by explaining to prayerful believers what Christ wants them to understand. The Spirit explains to us not only the meaning of Christ's teaching but also the enormous significance of His atoning sacrifice. The earthly life of Christ and His death on the cross have added dramatically to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What indications are there that, since Christ has died, the Spirit can now give believers a greater degree of spiritual and witnessing power? Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8.

"During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness. Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Spirit, that He might pour it upon His people."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.

"It is not that His work is more real in the new dispensation than in the old. It is not merely that it is more universal. It is that it is directed to a different end—that it is no longer for the mere preserving of the seed unto the day of planting, but for the perfecting of the fruitage and the gathering of the harvest. . . . In one word, that was a day in which the Spirit restrained His power. Now the great day of the Spirit is come."—Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 155, 156.

FURTHER STUDY: Study the special work of the Holy Spirit as described in the book of Judges: Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:24, 25; 14:6, 19; 15:14.

"There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God. There is not a blessing which God bestows upon man, nor a trial which He permits to befall him, but Satan both can and will seize upon it to tempt, to harass and destroy the soul, if we give him the least advantage. Therefore however great one's spiritual light, however much he may enjoy of the divine favor and blessing, he should ever walk humbly before the Lord, pleading in faith that God will direct every thought and control every impulse."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 421.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Some theologians and philosophers have argued that the God of the Old Testament is not the same Person as the God of the New Testament. They think that the merciful principles of the Sermon on the Mount are not reflected in the severe judgments upon sinners in the Old Testament. How does this week's lesson help to answer that criticism?
2. Some Bible students think that between Sinai and the cross salvation was by law keeping, not by God's grace as taught in the New Testament. How does our study of the Holy Spirit's work throughout the entire Old Testament period contradict that theory?
3. In what ways can you use the record of the Holy Spirit's work before the cross to witness to those who do not believe in God?

SUMMARY: The work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament era is repeated in the New Testament era. In addition, since the cross, the Spirit is Christ's special representative, presenting His teaching, drawing sinners to accept His infinite sacrifice for them, and explaining its enormous significance. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, the penalty for all human sin has been paid. Now the Spirit is poured out in even greater measure upon God's people than was possible before the cross.



The Chain That Is Not Broken

Joaquina Gomez Huerta

Gloria Soria left her native town in Spain for Madrid in search of better opportunities for her life. A devout Catholic, Gloria rose early every morning to spend time with the Lord before beginning her daily tasks.

Rosa Ramos, Gloria's neighbor, noticed her devotion and spoke to her about the second coming of Jesus. Gloria was impressed and wanted to know more, so Rosa enrolled her in Bible studies. Gloria then began to share what she learned with others, beginning with her two children and some friends. Eventually several people joined the family of the Lord and became links in the chain that never ends.

Gloria moved to another part of Madrid and there continued to share her faith with others. Mary Lazaro listened to what Gloria had to say. Mary's husband had left her and their four children for another woman. Through Mary's difficulties, Gloria encouraged her and told her about Christ.

Gloria invited me to study the Bible with Mary and her. Each week before we began our Bible study we shared the victories and answered prayers in Mary's life. Her oldest son suffered from asthma, and now he is well. Her youngest son's nervous disorder has improved. And her second son, who had gone with his father, is now with her, and they were renewing their mother-son relationship. There was another problem: Mary smoked and confessed that she could not leave it, although she knew she needed to. One night after our Bible Study we prayed especially that the Lord would give Mary the strength to quit smoking. The next week when we met, Mary told me that after my prayer she felt God's strength and had quit smoking.

We continued our Bible studies, and in time Mary and three of her children were baptized. Today they are active members in their church, and have become links in the chain that never ends.

Mary Lazaro's friend Maria came to the Bible-study group, and the Lord poured out blessings and answered prayers. Maria's faith in God is strong, and one day soon she too will become a link in the chain that never ends. Gloria and Mary continue to share their faith as the chain of faith continues to grow.

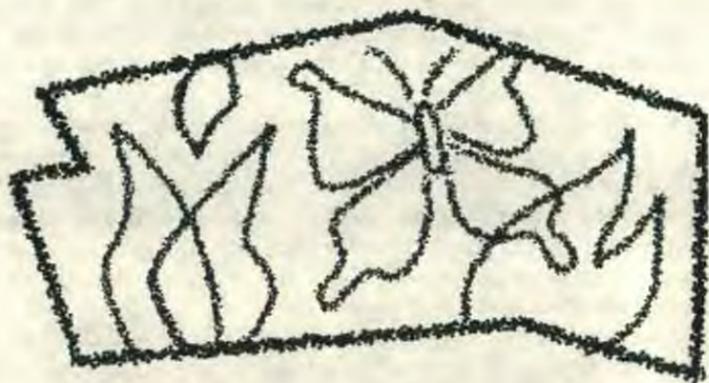
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Transformed by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 3:1-21, 34-36; Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 8:9, 10; Col. 2:6; 1 John 5:2-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above'" (John 3:3, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT. The drawing, convicting, transforming work of the Holy Spirit that produces the new-birth experience in the heart of the responding sinner is essential to salvation.

JESUS TAUGHT NICODEMUS HOW TO BE SAVED. All the elements in the salvation process are stated, alluded to, or illustrated in John 3. "In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation and His mission to the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

As a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus was hesitant to approach Jesus openly. To protect himself from possible criticism, he came to Jesus "by night" (John 3:2). He had been convicted that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but he had doubts and questions that could be resolved only by direct contact.

In his opening remarks, Nicodemus acknowledged that Jesus was an honored teacher sent from God, but stopped short of recognizing His messiahship. Ignoring the comment, Jesus immediately addressed Nicodemus' deep spiritual need. Only as His life was cleansed and transformed by the Holy Spirit could he have eternal life.

THE NEW BIRTH IS TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE (John 3:1-12).

Put yourself in Nicodemus' position. After listening to Christ's words, what conclusion would you draw as to the means by which you can be saved? John 3:1-7.

Jesus employed a metaphor to illustrate the manner in which God saves us. We cannot "see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (John 3:3, NRSV). The Greek word translated "from above" also means "again" (KJV) or "anew" (RSV). Rebirth from above is not an option; it is essential to salvation. "You *must* be born from above" (verse 7, NRSV). But how? Nicodemus was familiar with such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 64:6; Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26, 27. But, shocked at Christ's forthrightness, Nicodemus drew attention to the impossibility of a second physical birth (verse 4).

The rebirth of which Jesus spoke was spiritual—"of water and the Spirit" (verse 5, RSV). Water symbolizes spiritual cleansing "by the word" (Eph. 5:26), of which baptism and the Lord's Supper remind us (John 13:8; Heb. 10:22). The Holy Spirit cleanses us spiritually when we respond to the Word (1 Cor. 6:11); in the same divine act He makes us right with God and transforms our hearts.

How did Jesus illustrate the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts? John 3:8 (compare Ezek. 37:12-14; Isa. 44:3, 4).

Christ's saving work *for us* includes His transforming work *in us*. There is nothing of self in the new-birth experience; it is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit.

"While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173. (See 1 Peter 1:22, 23.)

**PAUL REPEATED JESUS' TEACHING ON SALVATION
(Titus 3:5-7).**

How did Jesus illustrate for Nicodemus the major events in the salvation process? John 3:14-21.

The new birth is made possible by the cross, illustrated by the serpent that Moses set on a pole so that Israelites who had been bitten by venomous snakes could look and live (Num. 21:8, 9). The serpent symbolized sin, and when Jesus died He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV). As the people looked to the uplifted serpent, their faith laid hold of God, and they were healed. As by faith we look to the cross, we are spiritually healed. Our sins, symbolized by the raised serpent, are forgiven; we are made right with God, and our hearts are transformed. This whole process of cleansing, reconciliation with God, and transformation is incorporated in Jesus' metaphor of salvation—the new birth (regeneration).

We believe and receive eternal life (John 3:15, 16, 36). We are free from condemnation because of past sin (John 3:17, 18; Rom. 8:1). We look to the cross, and Christ's life of holiness is counted for us as His Spirit takes possession of our hearts. As new life was imputed to the Israelites who looked to the brazen serpent, so Christ's righteous life is imputed to us as we look to Him.

With what other metaphor of salvation did Paul identify the new birth? Titus 3:5-7; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-9, 14.

The Lord "saved us" by the washing of "rebirth" (Titus 3:5, NIV), or "regeneration" (KJV). The Greek word means "rebirth." He saved us by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us in the new-birth experience (verse 6). He saved us by the Spirit, "so that, having been justified by His grace, we might be heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (verse 7, literally). The saving is by the transforming work of the Spirit (verses 5 and 6), and this experience Paul says is justification (verse 7).

The Galatians began their Christian walk with justification by faith (Gal. 2:16). They began "with the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3). The blessing of Abraham, to whom righteousness was "reckoned" (RSV; "accounted," KJV; "credited," NIV; "imputed," verse 6), can be ours as we "receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (verse 14). Jesus illustrated salvation by new birth. Paul used a different metaphor, justification, to explain the same event.

THE NEW BIRTH IS THE GIFT OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. 8:9, 10).

What character qualification must those have who are given eternal life? Matt. 25:46. How do we receive this character qualification? Rom. 8:1-4, 9, 10.

Born-again Christian believers are free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1; compare John 3:18). The Holy Spirit has set them free from sin and death (Rom. 8:2). God did what the law could not do; He provided the means of salvation through the death of His Son, "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature *but according to the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:4, NIV).

Jesus expressed the same truth: "Whoever lives by the truth [the person who has experienced the new birth] comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done *has been done through God*" (John 3:21, NIV).

The "righteous requirements of the law" (Rom. 8:4, NIV) are fulfilled in our lives because the Holy Spirit reigns there. "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, *yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness*" (Rom. 8:9, 10, NIV). Righteousness within (bestowed by the presence of the Holy Spirit) produces righteousness without—conformity to the "righteous requirements of the law."

Does this mean that born-again believers are righteous? 1 John 2:29; 3:7.

First John 2:29 translates literally: "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does righteousness has been born of him." The born-again believer "does righteousness." He or she does works that in God's sight are righteous, when he or she has been born of the Holy Spirit.

Then are you righteous? "Little children, let no one deceive you; he who does righteousness [the born-again believer, 1 John 2:29] *is righteous, as He is righteous*" (literally). Believers are *never* righteous independent of Christ, but because (1) Christ's righteousness is counted for them (Romans 4), and (2) Christ is living out His life through them by the Holy Spirit. (See Gal. 2:20.)

THE NEW BIRTH GIVES SPIRITUAL VICTORY (1 John 5:2-5).

We have discovered that righteousness in the heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit results in righteous works.

What did John teach about the means by which we have victory over sin? 1 John 5:2-5.

Because the Lord makes available enormous power through the work of the Holy Spirit, He expects us to receive this power by faith so that we can overcome. The promises to the churches given through John are available for those who overcome. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Rev. 2:7). "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (verse 11). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

How can we overcome as Jesus did? John answers that it is by maintaining a born-again, Spirit-filled fellowship with Christ. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 John 5:4, RSV). Overcoming the world, in the context of this passage, means obeying God's commandments. This is not "burdensome" (verse 3, RSV) for born-again believers, because they are constantly drawing upon the infinite power of the Holy Spirit.

How is the evil one frustrated in his attempt to lure us into sin? 1 John 5:18.

"In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then 'the righteousness of the law' will 'be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Romans 8:4. And the language of the soul will be: 'O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' Psalm 119:97."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

If you have not had this experience, are you ready to reach out for it by faith?

THE NEW BIRTH IS A DAILY EXPERIENCE (Col. 2:6).

Why is it essential to experience a daily renewal of fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Col. 2:6; Gal. 5:16, 25.

As it was for the ancient Galatians, our Christian walk is "begun with the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3, RSV). When we followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit, turned away from sin, and entered into heart-to-heart fellowship with the Spirit, we were born again. Now we grow spiritually more like Jesus by daily renewing our fellowship with Him. Within married life, daily communion between husband and wife is essential to a healthy, happy relationship. So, in our walk with Christ, as we commune with Him every day and invite Him to dwell in our hearts by His Spirit—overshadowing, directing, and motivating our endeavors—we enjoy continual peace of mind and constant spiritual growth.

"To follow Jesus requires wholehearted conversion at the start, and a repetition of this conversion every day."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1113.

"None are living Christians unless they have a daily experience in the things of God and daily practice self-denial, cheerfully bearing the cross and following Christ. Every living Christian will advance daily in the divine life. As he advances toward perfection, he experiences a conversion to God every day; and this conversion is not completed until he attains to perfection of Christian character, a full preparation for the finishing touch of immortality."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 505.

What assurance do we have that, though we are weak, the Lord will sustain us? 2 Cor. 4:16; Isa. 40:31.

The promise is that we can have daily spiritual renewal. But there is a condition. "*They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength*" (Isa. 40:31, RSV). This means taking time to commune with the Lord through prayer and allowing Him to speak with us through His Word. There is no substitute for daily devotions during which our waning spiritual forces are revitalized as the Spirit comes into our hearts with renewed energy.

"In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

FURTHER STUDY: Concerning the gift of Christ's righteousness as the means of victory over sin, study Romans 9:30-10:10.

Martin Luther saw the enormous significance of John 3 in relation to Paul's message of justification. In the introduction to his sermons on John 3, Luther wrote: "This chapter stresses above all else that sublime topic: faith in Christ, which alone justifies us before God."—*Luther's Works* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), vol. 22, p. 275.

Luther recognized the work of the Holy Spirit in justification. He wrote of "the Holy Spirit who justifies."—*Luther's Works*, vol. 26, p. 208.

Ellen White, who endorsed Luther's understanding of justification (*The Great Controversy*, p. 253), also emphasized the relationship between justification and the new birth: "As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Rom. 3:26."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 163.

Because of the emphasis in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, the recognition of the relationship between the new birth and justification has been common in Seventh-day Adventist literature. For example, I. H. Evans, for years a successful evangelist and administrator, wrote: "Justification is an act of God in behalf of the repentant sinner, freeing him from his sins because of his faith in Christ, without works or other merit on his part. It includes forgiveness for all past sins; regeneration, or the new birth; and in addition to these it imputes the righteousness of Christ."—*This Is the Way* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1939), p. 65.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: A friend in your church claims to be a born-again Christian, but he is harsh and domineering in the way he treats his wife and family. What could you do to help him see his inconsistency?

SUMMARY: The new-birth experience involves transformation of heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. When sinners respond to the conviction of the Spirit by accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord, their past sins are forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is both counted for them and bestowed upon them by the gift of the Spirit.



The Outboard That Ran on 'Faith'

Gerald F. Clifford

Lepsy Koia stared, amazed, at the outboard motor pushing his small canoe across the three-mile-wide river. The fuel lines hung loose, disconnected from the motor, yet the motor ran smoothly as he crossed the expanse of river.

Lepsy, a senior theology student at Pacific Adventist College in Papua New Guinea, was visiting remote villages in Southwest Papua New Guinea as part of his ministerial training.

With his small ministerial allowance Lepsy bought Bibles, Picture Rolls, and Bible-study cards. Little money was left for fuel, which costs the equivalent of US\$18.00 per gallon--if one can buy it. No wonder Lepsy was concerned that he might not make it to his destination. But now he watched as God stepped into his problem.

When Lepsy told the owner of the canoe and motor about the miracle, he was so impressed by the manifestation of God's concern for Lepsy, that he has joined the baptismal class.

While preparing to spend his vacation months ministering to these isolated people, Lepsy learned that most of the inhabitants of one village had been Adventists, but they had slipped back to their former ways. He felt he must visit these people before he visited the remaining 'heathen' villages. He prayed that God would show him how many former Adventists lived in this village. The next morning he found 56 pigs lined up in front of the little house where he slept. Lepsy visited this village and 30 more during his vacation.

Lepsy returned to school with a desire to visit the remaining villages in that area. The harvest is ripe and ready to be picked now. All that it requires is the workmen to move in to reap.

While the South Pacific Division does not have groups of one million or more that have not yet heard of Christ, thousands of villages, islands, and cultural groups have not been touched with the gospel. In the Vanatu Mission alone 1,800 villages need to be reached with the gospel. In another mission in the Solomon Islands the president lists 1,000 'unentered' villages.

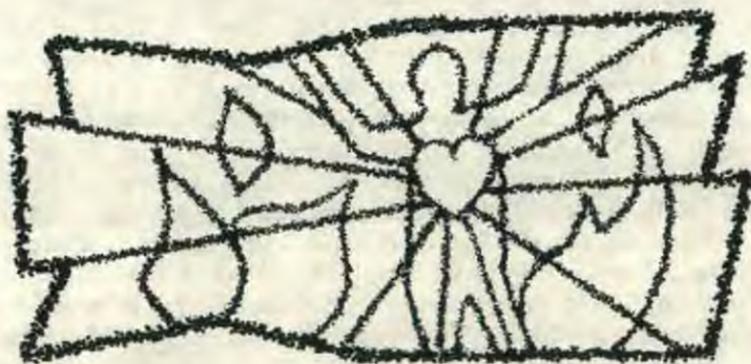
The harvest is ready and waiting for people like Lepsy Koia, who have a vision for mission.

Gerald F. Clifford is the administrative assistant to the president and Global Mission coordinator for South Pacific Division.

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Made Holy by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rom. 6:19-22; 1 Cor. 2:12-16; 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Peter 1:1, 2.

MEMORY TEXT: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

KEY THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit bestows upon the believer present holiness and empowers growth in holiness. The gift of holiness is the means by which our thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds are rendered acceptable in God's sight.

HOW CAN WE CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS? Good or evil actions begin with good or evil thoughts (Prov. 23:7). We are all aware that the hardest battle in life is the struggle to think straight. People who want to give up smoking have great difficulty keeping their thoughts off cigarettes. Alcoholics think constantly about drink, and lustful persons keep thinking about sex. Proud people focus on themselves, and dishonest people manufacture crooked schemes.

Most people will admit that there are some modes of thought that, of themselves, they cannot overcome, even though they recognize them as counterproductive. Mind training has some value, the exercise of the will achieves results, but the problem persists: the mind is not completely controllable in respect to some "attractive" objects.

Is there a solution to this dilemma? Can our thoughts ever be brought under control? How can the Holy Spirit help us?

THE HOLY SPIRIT JUSTIFIES AND SANCTIFIES (Rom. 6:19-22).

We discovered in the previous lesson that when we receive the Holy Spirit in the new-birth experience, He bestows the righteousness of Christ upon us.

What is the relationship between righteousness and sanctification (holiness)? Rom. 6:19-22.

The Greek word used in verses 19 and 22 translated "holiness" (KJV) and "sanctification" (RSV) is *hagiasmos*. It occurs ten times in the Greek New Testament. The KJV translates five of its instances "sanctification" and the other five instances "holiness."

Born-again Christians, who daily are enjoying a renewal of their fellowship with the Holy Spirit, follow Paul's counsel by constantly yielding their "members to righteousness for sanctification [holiness]" (Rom. 6:19, RSV). The Holy Spirit's gift of righteousness makes them holy. Paul explained: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification [holiness] and its end, eternal life" (Rom. 6:22, RSV). Sanctification is holiness, and holiness results from the gift of Christ's righteousness when we are justified.

"Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and 'God is love.' 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for 'all thy commandments are righteousness' (Psalm 119:172), and 'love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

The Bible teaching may be outlined as follows:

1. In justification the righteousness of Christ is both counted for us (Romans 4) and bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10).
2. Holiness is the immediate fruitage of the gift of righteousness (Rom. 6:19, 22).
3. The gift of righteousness in justification (salvation) is also the gift of holiness (1 Thess. 4:7, 8; 2 Thess. 2:13).
4. Holiness is sanctification (Rom. 6:19, 22).
5. Therefore when we are justified, we receive present holiness (sanctification) in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). The gift of Christ to our hearts both justifies and sanctifies us. Christ comes to us when we receive the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10). Therefore the Holy Spirit both justifies and sanctifies us. (See 1 Peter 1:2.)

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIFIES (1 Peter 1:1, 2).

One of the principles accepted by most non-Christian religions is that human beings can make themselves good. The concepts of goodness vary greatly, but the idea is very common that humans can cooperate with the gods, whoever or whatever they may be, so as to bring themselves into conformity to their moral and ethical standards. Even many Christians have accepted the idea that their works contribute to the level of their sanctification.

What basic principle did Paul teach on the means by which we become righteous? Rom. 3:20-22; Gal. 2:16.

We are made right with God (justified) *only* by faith in Jesus Christ. Our works do not make us right with God or earn the gift of Christ's righteousness. Christ gives righteousness to the believer in two ways: (1) His perfect righteousness is put to the believer's account (Rom. 4:5); (2) His righteousness is bestowed upon the believer in the new-birth experience (Rom. 3:22; 6:18; 8:9, 10).

What is the exclusive means by which we become holy (sanctified)?

Rom. 15:16 _____

2 Thess. 2:13 _____

1 Peter 1:1, 2 _____

"Paul teaches that believers are to be 'sanctified by the Holy Ghost.' Romans 15:16. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told His disciples: 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' John 16:13. And the psalmist says: 'Thy law is the truth.' By the word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in His law. . . . The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification.

"This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 469. (Emphasis supplied; see also *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 191; Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1144.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT BESTOWS PRESENT HOLINESS (1 Cor. 6:11).

Sanctification is correctly defined as growth in holiness. It is "the work of a lifetime."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 325. Because we are fallen human beings throughout our earthly existence, having tendencies to sin with which we must continually battle, our Christian walk is a process of constant spiritual growth.

What may be our relationship with Christ at any point in the process of spiritual growth? Consider the thief on the cross. (1) What did Jesus promise him? Luke 23:43. (2) What characteristic will be possessed by those who are taken to heaven at Jesus' second advent? Heb. 12:14. From these two points, what conclusion can you draw about the dying thief?

Study the literal translations of the following Bible passages. What do they teach regarding present sanctification or holiness for believers in Jesus Christ?

Acts 26:18—speaks of those "who have been sanctified by faith" (NASB).

Rom. 15:16—speaks of the Gentiles' "having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (literal translation).

1 Cor. 1:2—refers to the Corinthians as "those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints [holy ones] by calling" (NASB). Yet these church members were divided by controversy and prejudice. The point is that they were spoiling the beautiful gift of holiness given to them by the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 6:11—tells believers, "but you were washed, but *you were sanctified*, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in [by] the Spirit of our God" (NASB).

Col. 2:10—"In Him you have been made complete [perfect, full]" (NASB).

Heb. 10:10—"We have been sanctified" (NASB).

"Sanctification is a state of holiness, without and within, being holy and without reserve the Lord's, not in form, but in truth."—*Our High Calling*, p. 214.

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS GROWTH IN HOLINESS
(2 Cor. 3:18).

Holiness (sanctification) is the Holy Spirit's *present* gift to the believer in Christ. But the believer has not arrived at the zenith of spiritual development so that he or she need not experience further growth. In the new-birth experience we are given eternal life (John 3:36). Born-again believers, who have the Holy Spirit's gift of present holiness, have the assurance of present salvation in Christ. But they do not have the assurance that it is impossible for them to fall into sin and be lost.

How do we establish from Scripture that those who enjoy present holiness and salvation by the presence of the Holy Spirit can lose those gifts? John 15:6; 1 Cor. 9:27 (compare Luke 8:13; 11:24-26).

Having genuine fellowship with Christ by the Holy Spirit does not mean that it is impossible for us to fall away; we have not lost our freedom of choice. The Bible does not teach that once we have received the new-birth experience we can never lose it. Our fallen natures, worked upon by the evil one, are constantly urging us to behaviors that are contrary to God's will. Therefore, even though the Holy Spirit is in charge of our minds and bodies at this moment, it is essential that a living faith be manifested continually through earnest prayer, study of the Word, and witnessing. Such faith is the key to spiritual growth.

According to the following passages, how do we grow in holiness? 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:3, 7; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 3:18.

Growth in holiness is the process made possible by daily reliance upon the power of Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit. Because the believer is still a fallen human being, sanctification as growth involves constant surrender to Christ so that the Holy Spirit wins the inner war. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 299.)

"We need constantly a fresh revelation of Christ, a daily experience that harmonizes with His teachings. High and holy attainments are within our reach. Continual progress in knowledge and virtue is God's purpose for us. His law is the echo of His own voice, giving to all the invitation, Come up higher. Be holy, holier still. Every day we may advance in perfection of Christian character."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 503.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN DIRECT OUR THOUGHTS (1 Cor. 2:12-16).

Healing of the mind is Christ's work for us, performed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is the present and progressive work spoken of in Scripture as sanctification. No amount of autosuggestion will cure our habit of wrong thinking. Only God can implant the purity we crave as we focus our thoughts on Jesus.

How do we receive and retain Christ's mind? 1 Cor. 2:12-16 (compare Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:5-11).

Because their minds have been transformed by the Holy Spirit, true believers in Christ have thoughts, desires, and motives that are implanted from above. They are pure, humble, unselfish, kind, and loving because Jesus is. The daily gift of Christ's righteousness by the Holy Spirit makes them holy people. They are the last to claim holiness for themselves, but they extol Christ's holiness because they know that Christ is living in their lives (1 John 5:10). Their thoughts have a new direction. They have habitual victory over evil, whereas before they suffered constant defeat.

To what extent may our thoughts be under the control of the Holy Spirit? 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. What kind of thoughts does He enable us to think? Phil. 4:7, 8.

If we allow Him, the Holy Spirit will "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5, RSV).

"By His perfect obedience He [Christ] has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY: Compare the mind of the person who does not know Christ (Rom. 8:5, 7; Titus 1:15; Eph. 2:2, 3; Col. 1:21; Phil. 3:18, 19) with the mind of the person who does know Him (Rom. 8:6; 12:3; Ps. 1:2; 143:5).

"Christ alone can help us and give us the victory. Christ must be all in all to us. He must dwell in the heart, His life must circulate through us as the blood circulates through the veins. His Spirit must be a vitalizing power that will cause us to influence others to become Christlike and holy."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1144.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Some members of your church are convinced that, because James wrote that "faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26, RSV), our good works play a part in making us holy. What Bible answer can you give them?
2. A church member is convinced that we are never holy in this life; we are always growing toward holiness, but we won't have it until Jesus comes. How would you help her?
3. Another church member suggests to you that the following quotation contradicts the teaching of this lesson regarding present holiness in Christ: "So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561. How can this statement be explained to be thoroughly consistent with the teaching of this lesson?

(Consider also: "At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 65.)

SUMMARY: When we are born again, the Holy Spirit bestows upon us the righteousness of Christ. Because righteousness is holiness, we receive both forgiveness (justification) and present holiness (sanctification) when we receive Christ. We grow in holiness by daily inviting Christ to fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit. As He controls our thoughts, we enjoy victory over sin and gain the capacity to focus our minds on that which is pure and lovely.



Church Built in 130 Days

Alejandro Bullon

Palmira do Nascimento Chagas is a young woman with energy and a vision. She accepted the challenge to participate in the church's Global Mission outreach. The district of Barra do Sao Joao, 62 miles (100 kilometers) from Rio de Janeiro, had no Adventist presence, so she moved there and began working to conquer a new territory for Christ.

Palmira visited the mayor and requested land to build a church and a day-care center. The mayor was dubious that this young woman could build a church, much less fill it with believers, but he agreed to her request.

After she obtained the property she visited the city's businesses and requested donations of construction materials to build the church and day-care facility. She successfully obtained enough materials to begin work. Construction began in July 1993, and in just 130 days the building was finished--a beautiful church that seats 120 people and a day-care center that can accommodate 30 children.

But there were no Adventists in this village. So while the church was being built, Palmira began visiting people door-to-door and inviting them to attend a "Voice of Youth" evangelistic series--for which she was the preacher. People were attracted by her diligence and energy, and many came to the meetings. At the end of the meetings 27 people were baptized, and others are studying for baptism.

In November, just five months after the church was started, the facilities were inaugurated. The mayor was present and congratulated Palmira on her vision and her persistence to complete such a project almost singlehandedly.

The new church contains young people like Palmira, ready to dream and work to build up the church and fulfill its mission.



The mayor of Barra do Sao Joao, Brazil (left) congratulates Palmira do Nascimento Chagas at the inauguration of the day-care center and the new church. Alejandro Bullon is the Global Mission Coordinator for the South American Division.

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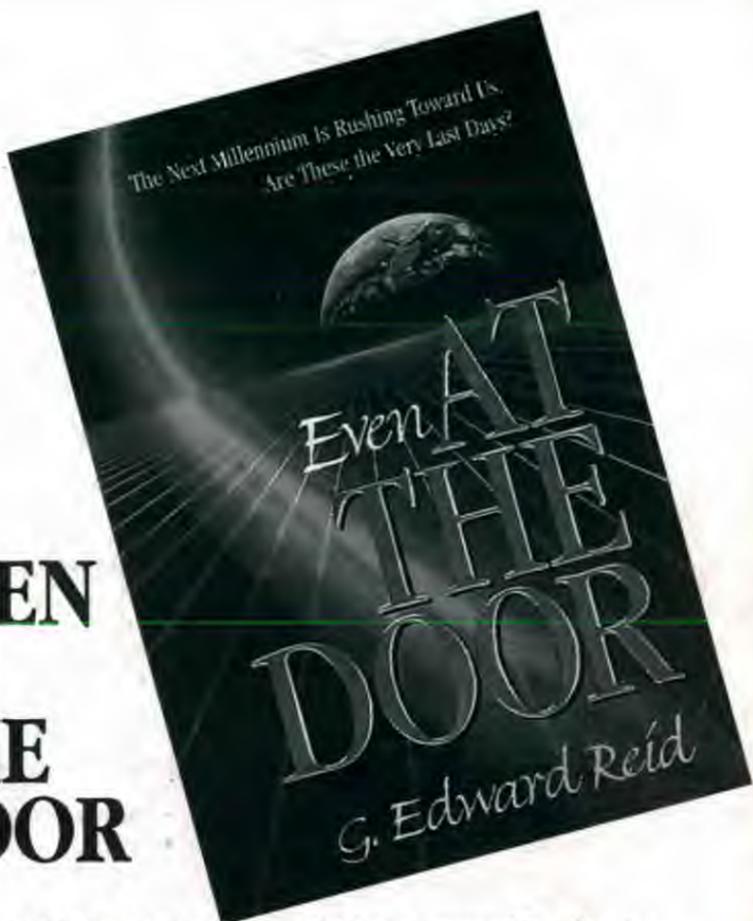
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Victorious by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 17:1; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 14:23; 1 John 3:24; Jude 24.

MEMORY TEXT: "All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us" (1 John 3:24, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Through His Spirit, Jesus is able to keep us from sinning and to enable us to reflect His character. The Bible standard is fellowship with the Lord as the means of constant victory.

WE MUST COME TO TERMS WITH OUR SIN PROBLEM: A youth flippantly commented to a preacher, "You say that unsaved people carry a weight of sin. I feel nothing. *How heavy is sin?* Is it ten pounds? Eighty pounds?" The preacher asked the youth, "If you laid a four hundred pound weight on a corpse, would it feel the load?"

"Of course not," replied the youth. "It would feel nothing because it is dead." The preacher responded, "That person too is spiritually dead who feels no load of sin or is indifferent to its burden and flippant about its presence."

To claim the gift of the Holy Spirit in "latter rain" power without coming to terms with our sin problem is presumption. One of the vital prerequisites to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us is our willingness to forsake all sin. The delightful truth is that the Holy Spirit so works in our hearts that we have victory over sin and are ready for a greater outpouring of His power.

JESUS IS ABLE TO KEEP US FROM FALLING (Jude 24).

From how many of our sins is Jesus able to deliver us? Jude 24; 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:16.

Not only is Jesus able to keep us from apostatizing, he is able to keep us from falling into *any* sin, and thus able to present us "without blemish before the presence of his glory" (Jude 24, RSV). Because no temptation with which we are confronted is beyond our strength to resist when we are empowered by the Lord (1 Cor. 10:13), there is no reason why we must be overcome by any temptation. "The shield of faith" enables us to "quench *all* the flaming darts of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16, RSV). *All* is an absolute word; there are no darts that Satan can fire at us that we cannot quench when empowered by Christ.

To argue that, because of our natural human tendencies there are some sins that we cannot overcome, is to depreciate the power of Christ. He promises the power to overcome any temptation that comes our way; and He promises to neutralize all Satan's attacks against us. Why do we doubt Him?

What other encouraging assurances do we have that, through the power of Christ, we can be victorious in the battle with sin? John 10:29; Eph. 3:20; Heb. 2:18.

The implications of these statements are enormous. Christ is able to give us victory over pride, bigotry, selfishness, jealousy, dishonesty, impurity, bitterness, hypocrisy. He is able to give a sin-wracked soul freedom from the crippling power of evil. He is able to impart peace in place of passion, love in place of hatred, and trust in place of fear.

"We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 355.

Have you assumed that, because there are some sins you have not overcome, Christ will overlook them and save you in your sins? What is the antidote to this attitude?

THE STANDARD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Gen. 17:1).

What spiritual standard did God hold up before Abraham and his posterity? Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13.

The English word *perfect* used in the King James Version of these verses translates the Hebrew word *tamim*, which means "complete, incontestable, blameless, whole, perfect, innocent, upright, honest." The same word often refers to animal sacrifices that were to be "without blemish" (Exod. 12:5; 29:1; Lev. 1:3, 10; 22:21). This Hebrew word is also used to refer to God as perfect (Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 22:31; Job 36:4). Ezekiel uses this word in describing Lucifer before sin was found in his heart (Ezek. 28:15). The "undefiled" (*tamim*), spoken of in Psalm 119:1, "who walk in the law of the Lord," are "the perfect."

God was asking Abraham and Israel to turn away from all sin, to be right with Him in heart, and to obey His law perfectly.

How does 1 Kings 8:61 define what it means to have a perfect heart with God?

The word *perfect* (KJV) in this verse translates the Hebrew word *shalem*, meaning "complete, full, finished, whole." It is the word that described the kind of weights and measures the Lord wanted His people to use (Deut. 25:15). The same word is used to describe the spiritual life of King Asa (1 Kings 15:14) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3). Insofar as this word was used to refer to human beings, it focused on their spiritual victories rather than their failures. Solomon was instructed to have a "perfect heart" (1 Chron. 28:9; 29:19). Amaziah did right in God's sight, "but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chron. 25:2).

The Old Testament message is decidedly in favor of fellowship with God that enables obedience to His law. God expected His people to keep His law because of their covenant relationship with Him.

How would you answer the objection claiming that salvation was by law keeping in the Old Testament period, hence the standard given to Israel does not apply to us? Gal. 3:15-18; Deut. 6:4-6; 30:11-14; Hab. 2:4.

THE STANDARD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Matt. 5:48).

What standard did Jesus uphold to His followers? Matt. 5:48 (compare Col. 1:28).

The Greek word translated "perfect" (KJV) in these verses is *teleios*, which means "complete, whole, full-grown, mature."

In commenting on Matthew 5:48, Ellen White wrote: "The conditions of eternal life, under grace, are just what they were in Eden—perfect righteousness, harmony with God, perfect conformity to the principles of His law. The standard of character presented in the Old Testament is the same that is presented in the New Testament. This standard is not one to which we cannot attain. In every command or injunction that God gives there is a promise, the most positive, underlying the command. God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace. . . ."

"He tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe. We have nothing of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us, and we are to reflect its brightness. 'In His borrowed goodness good,' we may be perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His.

"Jesus said, Be perfect as *your Father* is perfect. If you are the children of God you are partakers of His nature, and you cannot but be like Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76-78.

Summarize the teaching of the following passages:

2 Cor. 7:1 _____

Heb. 6:1 _____

James 1:4 _____

1 Peter 1:15, 16 _____

It is difficult to imagine how the apostles could have expressed themselves in more positive terms. Clearly they were urging total victory over sin by Christ's power for believers who retain fallen natures. This is the genius of the gospel. Christ is able to take the most unpromising person and give that person His nature and His victory.

IMPERFECT PEOPLE CAN HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN (Rom. 14:23).

How does Ephesians 4:13 define what the New Testament writers mean by Christian perfection?

"A perfect man" (KJV) or "mature manhood" (RSV) is defined as "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." In other words, Christian perfection is Christlikeness. Since "God is love," Christ perfectly exemplified love. We are told that we cannot equal Christ's infinitely perfect character, but that we should copy it. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549.) We may reflect His love and live without committing sin. (See Rev. 3:21.)

"He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1904.

What indications do we have that not all human imperfection is sin? John 9:41; 15:22, 24; Rom. 14:23.

All sin is imperfection, but not all imperfection is sin. By perfection, the Bible means a life filled with the Holy Spirit and, therefore, free from acts of sin—whether in thought, feeling, word, or deed. The perfection that Jesus gives us before His second advent is not freedom from our fallen humanity. (See 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20, 21.) Though we remain fallen in nature, yet we can have complete victory in Christ. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.) Because we remain fallen human beings until Jesus comes, **everything we do is tinged with human imperfection.** Imperfect minds and bodies are not capable of doing anything absolutely perfectly. *But not everything we do is sin.*

If all human imperfection were sin, Jesus could not have made the statement recorded in John 15:22. Not until the people had received light from Jesus did God regard the imperfect works they were doing as sin. God knows that our natural human imperfections are the result of spiritual, mental, and physical fallenness. By contrast, "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4, RSV). Christian preachers or writers would not claim that their efforts are free from human imperfection. But they are not sinning while they preach and write. But if God gives them greater light, and they refuse to present that light, then they are sinning. "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23, RSV).

SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVERS ENJOY DOING CHRIST'S WILL
(1 John 3:24).

The Bible does not teach that the Lord grants us the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after we have achieved victory over sin. It teaches that the Spirit empowers us to overcome so that He can grant us a greater measure of His presence and power in our lives.

According to the following passages, how does the Lord enable us to do His will?

Ezek. 11:19, 20 _____

Ezek. 36:27 _____

John 14:17, 21, 23 _____

1 John 3:24 _____

“Christ Himself calls our attention to the growth of the vegetable world as an illustration of the agency of His Spirit in sustaining spiritual life. The sap of the vine, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit. So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Saviour, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 284.

Compare four occasions when Jesus gave His Spirit to His disciples: (1) Luke 9:1, 2 (1 Cor. 12:9, 10); (2) John 20:22; (3) Acts 2:4; (4) Acts 4:31. What made possible the progressively greater gift of the Spirit?

“The measure of the Holy Spirit we receive will be proportionate to the measure of our desire, and the faith exercised for it, and the use we shall make of the light and knowledge that shall be given to us. We shall be entrusted with the Holy Spirit according to our capacity to receive and our ability to impart it to others.”—Ellen G. White, Letter 54, 1894.

“We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 508.

FURTHER STUDY: Concerning the preparation Jesus would have us make for His second advent, study Revelation 3:1-6, Daniel 12:1, and Revelation 19:7, 8. What did the Lord mean when He said, "I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God" (Rev. 3:2, RSV)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think Ellen White meant when she wrote the following: "When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 382? Did she mean, "Do your best to overcome sin, but, if you fail, Jesus knows you have done your best; He will simply overlook your sin by counting His merits for you. Hence, overcoming is not important; what is important is doing your best"?

We should quote the following few sentences: "But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him, and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment. We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easygoing, accommodating, crossless religion. But Jesus says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'"—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 382. Compare: "Jesus makes up for our unavoidable deficiencies."—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 196.

2. In the light of this week's lesson, how do you react to this statement by Martin Luther? "Works that result from the Word and are done in faith are perfect in the eyes of God, no matter what the world thinks about them."—*Luther's Works* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1961), vol. 3, p. 318.
3. One of your work associates is a Christian who believes that, because salvation is by grace, attempting to obey the Ten Commandments is legalism. How would you answer him? (See Rom. 6:1-14.)

SUMMARY: While we are trusting Him, Jesus enables us to overcome every temptation to sin. The Old and New Testament standard is total victory through the power of the Holy Spirit. He strengthens us to overcome, even though we remain imperfect, fallen human beings.



With Such an Army as This, part 1

Sven H. Jensen

A group of tired and dusty young people walked into the camp where we were holding a training session for Global Mission teams and lay evangelists from Sudan. They had walked for ten days to bring their reports of youth evangelism in western Sudan. The walk had taken them dangerously close to the fighting lines, and they risked being taken captive by either government or rebel forces. The roaring of guns and artillery had kept them awake at night. But they arrived safely and praised God for His protection and care.

These young people had come to report what God had done through youth in the Year of Youth Evangelism. Nathana Butwell, group leader, said, "Jesus Christ blessed the works of our Youth Societies and empowered us to preach without fear. As a result 344 souls were baptized during 1993."

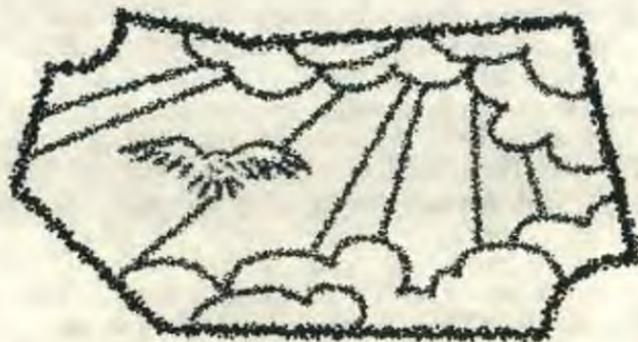
The young people tell of victory in spite of hardships. In some cases no ordained pastor has been able to reach their area to baptize the people they have prepared. But through it all, the youth are confident that God has been with them in a special way.

Butwell tells about the evangelistic effort in the village of Mvolo: "The chief accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour, then he invited young and old to come and hear the truth. He gave a piece of land for a church in Mvolo and asked the young men to build a church and a house for the Global Mission team." The evangelistic team visited door to door and held public meetings in the marketplace. A pastor of another denomination let them preach in his church twice a month, and three days a week they conducted morning devotions in public. When an Adventist pastor came to Mvolo, he baptized 16 persons. The chief of Mvolo is pleased that the true religion has come to his area.

When another team began visiting homes in their territory, they soon found enough interested people to begin a Sabbath School. By the end of the year 36 had been baptized. Many in this community are interested in the gospel, but polygamy is an obstacle to the truth. There are many children here, and we hope in this new year that the church will experience much growth.

Sven H. Jensen is the church ministries director in the Middle East Union.

The Promise of Rain



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Joel 1, 2; John 14-16; Acts 1.

MEMORY TEXT: "He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before" (Joel 2:23, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: The Lord assures us that, if we wait upon Him in earnest prayer and surrender to His will, He will pour the Holy Spirit upon us as He pours needed rain upon the parched earth.

THE RAINDROPS OF GOD'S BLESSINGS REFRESH HIS THIRSTING PEOPLE. When a preacher died, his loved ones found a neat package of his sermons with a note attached that read: "Where has the influence gone of all these sermons I have preached?"

On the other side of the card was this answer: "Where are last year's sunrays? They have gone into fruits and grain and vegetables to feed mankind. Where are last year's raindrops? Forgotten by most people, of course, but they did their refreshing work, and their influence still abides."

The influence upon humanity of the refreshing outpourings of the Holy Spirit cannot be measured. As the rain provides nourishment to germinate seed, to cause plants to grow, and to ripen the harvest, "so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

In this lesson we study God's promise of rain, His assurance that, if by faith His people fulfill the conditions, they will receive more abundant life-giving showers of His Spirit.

WHEN THE SPIRIT IS RAINED UPON US (Joel 2:23).

What was one of the ways the Lord demonstrated His approval or disapproval of ancient Israel? Lev. 26:3, 4; Deut. 11:13, 14; 28:12.

An agricultural society would find very meaningful God's provision of rain as a symbol of His blessing, and the absence of rain as a symbol of blessings withdrawn. This symbolism is common throughout the Old Testament. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon prayed that the Lord would grant rain when the people repented of their sins (1 Kings 8:35, 36). God revealed His disapproval of Israel's apostasy in Elijah's time by allowing a three-and-one-half-year drought (1 Kings 17:1, 7, 14). Job, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, and Zechariah pointed to rain or lack of it as a special mark of divine favor or disfavor. (See Job 5:10; Jer. 3:2, 3; Isa. 5:5, 6; Amos 4:7; Zech. 14:17.)

Rain in general, but especially the two most important annual rainfalls, the early and latter rains, are used to illustrate God's loving acceptance of His faithful people.

In Palestine, the "early rain" ("former" or "autumn" rain) falls late in October or in November when the seed is sown. The "latter rain" coming in the spring, in March and early April, facilitates the ripening of the grain for the harvest.

What specific divine gifts does rainfall represent? Hosea 6:3; 10:12; Joel 2:23, 28 (compare Isa. 32:15-17).

The Lord comes to us "as the spring rains that water the earth" (Hosea 6:3, RSV). As we respond in love to His appeals, He "comes and showers righteousness" upon us (Hosea 10:12, NIV). Righteousness is bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 32:15-17). The obvious intent of the Bible writers is to use rainfall as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God's people. (Compare the New Testament emphasis: Acts 14:17; James 5:7, 8, 16-18.)

This intent was shared by Joel. The Hebrew of Joel 2:23 may be translated, "He has given to you the early rain for righteousness," or, as the NIV renders it, "He has given you a teacher for righteousness." Either way, considering the text in relation to verse 28, the reference is to the gift of the Holy Spirit, who, as Christ's representative, is our source of righteousness. When the Spirit is rained upon us, we have the qualification for salvation—righteousness.

WHY THE RAIN IS NEEDED (Joel 1, 2).

As you read the first two chapters of Joel, ask yourself:

What major events have caused the desolation of the land? Joel 1:4, 19, 20; 2:3-9.

What impression do you receive regarding the spiritual condition of Israel at that time? Joel 1:5, 9, 11, 13; 2:12, 13.

For what immediately future event is the Lord seeking to prepare His people? Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2, 11.

In view of the emergency situation, what counsel does the Lord give? Joel 1:14; 2:12-17.

How does the Lord restore His people materially and spiritually? Joel 2:18-27.

Now apply Joel 1 and 2 to the professed people of God today. Why are we in our present spiritual condition? What immediately future events should we prepare for? What should we do now to make preparation? (See 2 Peter 3:7-14.)

Joel saw the restoration of the literal early and latter rains (Joel 2:23). Then, looking into the distant future, what did he predict would happen just prior to the end-time day of the Lord? Joel 2:28-32.

As we interpret Joel 2:28-32, we must consider a number of important facts: (1) The context of the passage is the restoration of the early and latter rains (verse 23); (2) Joel predicted that the great outpouring of the Spirit would come a short while before the day of the Lord; (3) Peter applied the passage to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

"In immediate connection with the scenes of the great day of God, the Lord by the prophet Joel has promised a special manifestation of His Spirit. Joel 2:28. This prophecy received a partial fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; but it will reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the gospel."—*The Great Controversy*, p. ix.

JESUS REPEATS THE PROMISE (John 14:16-18).

In His discussion with His disciples after the Last Supper, what topics led up to the promise of the Holy Spirit? John 14:1-3, 6, 9, 12, 15.

Jesus focused on His going away and His eventual return. In the interim, His disciples needed to depend on Him as the one equal with and united with the Father (verses 9-11). It was important for them to understand that by vibrant faith in Him they constantly could receive the spiritual resources for effective service and acceptable obedience (verses 12-15). "While He was building mansions for them, they were to build characters after the divine similitude."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

List the aspects of the Holy Spirit's work for believers that Jesus promised in the following passages:

John 14:17, 18, 23 _____

John 14:26; 16:13 _____

John 15:26; 16:14, 15 _____

John 16:8-11 _____

"The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. . . .

"The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

THE COMMAND TO TARRY (Acts 1:8).

After Jesus' resurrection, what first step did He take to fulfill His promise of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit? John 20:22, 23.

In the same interview, Jesus bestowed three blessings upon His disciples: (1) peace (John 20:21); (2) the commission to continue the work assigned Him by the Father (verse 21); (3) the ability and responsibility to apply on earth decisions that had already been made in heaven.

Verse 23 is correctly rendered by Randolph O. Yeager: "If you forgive the sins of anyone, they have already been forgiven for them. If you retain the sins of anyone they have already been retained." (Compare Matt. 16:19; 18:18.)

Yeager comments on the Greek of the passage: "Thus at the time that the Christian witness remits or retains a sinner's sins, those sins in question are the ones that have already been forgiven or retained as a result of the previous completed action. Thus the action of the preacher is only a ratifying action of a situation that has already been fixed and which therefore currently prevails."—Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1982), vol. 9, p. 19.

The disciples could enjoy these remarkable qualifications for Christian life and service only by receiving the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Jesus imparted a measure of this gift at this time.

"Before He left His disciples, Christ 'breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' John 20:22. Again He said, 'Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you.' Luke 24:29. But not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

Why did Jesus instruct His disciples to remain in Jerusalem for a period of time after His ascension? Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.

Jesus met intermittently with His disciples for a forty-day period after His resurrection (Acts 1:3). During the ten days between His ascension and Pentecost they were to remain in the city, communing with God and with one another in preparation for the great outpouring of the Spirit.

THE DAYS BEFORE PENTECOST (Acts 1:14).

What events occurred in heaven after Jesus' ascension? Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:8-13.

"He [Jesus] enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. . . .

"The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. . . .

"With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' Rev. 5:12."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

How did Jesus' disciples spend the ten days between His ascension and Pentecost? Luke 24:52, 53; Acts 1:12-14.

Note the following description of the disciples' activities during this period given in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35-37:

1. Prayer: "They . . . met together to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus. They knew that they had a Representative in heaven, an Advocate at the throne of God" (p. 35).

"The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. . . . They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised. . . .

"Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift [the gift of the Holy Spirit], and in heaven Christ added His intercession" (p. 37).

2. They humbled their hearts in true repentance: "As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief" (p. 36).

3. They put things right with one another: "Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship" (p. 37).

4. They repeated the truths Jesus had taught: "As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. They reproached themselves for their misapprehension of the Saviour" (p. 36).

5. They meditated on Christ's life: "As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character" (p. 36).

FURTHER STUDY: Consider how, between Christ's ascension and Pentecost, the Holy Spirit led the disciples in the selection of a successor to Judas: Acts 1:15-26.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What parallels are there between the disciple's circumstances from Christ's ascension to Pentecost and our situation today?
2. Do you see need for your local church to copy the activities of the disciples between the ascension and Pentecost? How can such activities be arranged?
3. One of your friends regards regular prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as an evidence of fanaticism. How would you go about convincing him otherwise?
4. To what extent do you sense that the Holy Spirit has qualified you to work for Christ? Are you conscious of the Spirit's work in your heart, bringing you closer to Christ and enabling you to overcome sin? If not, how can you have this experience?

SUMMARY: Throughout Scripture, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is often symbolized by rainfall. Jesus expanded upon the promises of Old Testament prophets for a special outpouring of His Spirit upon repentant, believing people. After His death and resurrection, His disciples devoted themselves to heart-searching and prayer in preparation for the unprecedented infilling of the Spirit that their Lord had forecast.



With Such an Army as This, part 2

Sven H. Jensen

During the training session for youth evangelism teams in Sudan, Wilson Wani and Benjamin Luke told how God helped them in a difficult situation. "When we reached Tambura [Sudan] we were arrested and sent back because we did not have the right documents. On the way we witnessed to many people we met.

"In June we headed for Tambura again, but this time we were detained at Yambio. We were, however, free to move about, and we began to visit and give Bible studies. In one month we had a group of 15 studying with us, and we started a Sabbath School. By December we were 20."

God had His hand over these two young men in a marvelous way: "When we were imprisoned and threatened, we could have given in to fear, but we learned to trust God more and pray more, and we learned to depend on Him to supply our most basic needs. We had no relatives or friends to feed us, but we never went one day without food. Others who were in custody received many lashes, but we stayed three weeks without a single strike. Others labored seven days a week, but for us Sabbath was free."

Another team, made up of Domian Festus and Silvanus John, went to Agutran. They were welcomed by the local government officials. After they had worked there for several months, 84 people were attending their meetings. Several were ready for baptism, but no pastor has been able to reach them yet. Many of them are now living as Adventists and are waiting for a pastor to come and baptize them. By November there was no water in Agutran, and the whole village moved south. But when the rain comes in April these two will return to Agutran and continue their ministry.

After the training session these young people will return to their individual fields with new courage and a good supply of Bibles and other materials. They will raise up new congregations in the unentered areas of southern Sudan. With God's continued blessing and such dedicated young people, this year can be another banner year for Global Mission in this troubled land.

Sven H. Jensen is the church ministries director in the Middle East Union.

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The Former Rain



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Joel 2:23; Acts 2:1-47; 4:23-37; John 3:5-7.

MEMORY TEXT: "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: The former rain began with the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It continues as it began, as both a corporate and an individual experience.

PENTECOST BEGAN THE FULFILLMENT OF JOEL'S PROPHECY: Joel illustrated the special bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the church by Palestine's former and latter rains (Joel 2:23, 28, 29). Peter applied Joel's prophecy to the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). But Joel pinpointed the time of the Spirit's outpouring to the period immediately prior to the great day of the Lord (Joel 2:30-32). Pentecost began the former rain, and the final great bestowal of the Spirit upon God's people shortly before Jesus comes will be the latter rain.

"The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. . . .

"But near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 54, 55.

PENTECOST (Acts 2:1-36).

Describe the manner in which the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon Christ's disciples after their ten days of fellowship and prayer. Acts 2:1-4.

There was a sound, an appearance, an infilling, and an immediate result. The "tongues" were not fire; they *appeared* like fire. Each praying disciple was filled with an unprecedented measure of spiritual power.

The believers began to speak the languages of other nations. Why? Acts 2:4-12.

The Spirit is not given primarily for emotion, but as a means of holiness and the power to witness. It was not merely a case of the many nationalities present in Jerusalem for Pentecost *hearing* the disciples speaking in other tongues (verses 6, 11); the disciples were actually *speaking* them (verse 4).

"The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 39, 40.

Analyze the sermon Peter preached after being filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:22-36.

1. *The sermon was Christ-centered.* Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, had been raised from the dead and now was sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven. "God has made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36, RSV).

2. *There was frank exposure of sin.* "This Jesus . . . you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (verse 23, RSV). The Lord and Christ is "this Jesus whom you crucified" (verse 36, RSV).

3. *The sermon was based on Scripture.* Note how Peter interpreted Psalm 16:8-11. Jesus, not David, was the one delivered from the corruption of the grave. Jesus, not David, was the one who ascended to heaven (verse 34).

THE RESULTS OF PENTECOST (Acts 2:37-47).

In the passages indicated, identify the results of Pentecost that are listed here:

Conviction (Acts 2:37) _____

Repentance (verses 38, 40) _____

Baptism (verses 38, 41) _____

Spiritual devotion (verse 42) _____

Love and sharing (verses 44-47) _____

Healing (Acts 3:1, 2, 6-8) _____

Courage in witnessing (Acts 3:11-19) _____

How do we know that the great Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit can be ours today? Acts 2:39.

"To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.

"Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away. . . .

"So it may be now. Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 20, 21.

The evil one mounts a counteroffensive when God's people, filled with the Spirit, take the gospel to the world. Acts 4:1-4.

Peter's response was motivated by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8). He placed the responsibility for the death of Christ precisely where it belonged (verse 10, 11). Only through Him whom His persecutors had crucified is salvation possible (verse 12).

THE EXPERIENCE OF PENTECOST REPEATED (Acts 4:23-37).

After Peter and John were released from prison, what did the believers do? Acts 4:23-30. What was the immediate result? Verse 31. Compare the spiritual condition of the believers at this time (verses 32-37) with their condition as described in Acts 2.

Once again the answer came in response to earnest prayer. Notice how the prayer pulsates with praise, faith, and assurance. Note also that there were physical manifestations, as well as spiritual, when the Lord poured His Spirit upon the praying believers (verse 31). The resulting spiritual power dramatically influenced individual lives, as well as the corporate body. Love, unity, and generosity reigned supreme, while Christ crucified, resurrected, and ministering for sinners was the central focus of the church's witness (verse 33).

How were the apostolic church's evangelistic efforts influenced by the power given at Pentecost? Acts 8:4-8. When was the Holy Spirit received by the believers in Samaria? Acts 8:14-17.

Despite the traditional animosity between Jews and Samaritans, Philip's Spirit-filled preaching moved multitudes in Samaria. But these new converts needed to develop confidence in the church's Jewish leaders. Thus the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Samaritan believers was given *after baptism*, when Peter and John visited Samaria and prayed for them.

Was the Spirit bestowed upon the believers in Cornelius' household before or after baptism? Acts 10:44-48.

Cornelius and his followers were Gentiles. The Jewish Christians needed to be convinced that God accepted them as readily as He did Jews. Hence, the Spirit was poured out upon these Gentiles *before baptism*, as evidence that they were thoroughly qualified to be baptized and become regular members of the church. (Compare Acts 19:1-7.)

Has the former rain been given to your local church? If not, under what circumstances can it be received?

THE FORMER RAIN IN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE (John 3:5-7).

What is the former rain for the individual believer? John 3:5-7; Eph. 3:14-20; James 5:7, 8.

When we accept Christ as Saviour and Lord, He comes into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and our personal former-rain experience begins. What happened corporately for the body of believers at Pentecost happens as effectively, even though usually less dramatically, in individual experience.

James borrowed Old Testament symbolism in urging believers to wait patiently for the second coming of Jesus (James 5:7, 8). The farmer knows that his crops will mature only if watered by both the former and latter rains. Even so, Christian believers will be ready for the Lord's harvest only by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in both the former- and latter-rain experience. In the former rain the seed is germinated, and the plant grows. In the spiritual realm, the divine seed of truth is germinated by the new-birth experience and nourished thereafter by daily renewal of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Consider the dramatic work of the Spirit in the individual heart (Eph. 3:14-20): Verse 16, He strengthens us spiritually. Verse 17, He brings Christ's presence to our hearts. Verses 18, 19, He enables us to grasp something of the massive dimensions of Christ's love. Verse 19, He fills us with "all the fulness of God"(RSV). Verse 20, He is the power within us to accomplish "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (RSV).

In relation to the passage we have just studied, consider the enormous significance of Colossians 2:10 (compare Rev. 3:2-5).

The same Greek verb is used in Colossians 2:10 as in Revelation 3:2, *pleroo*, which means "to make full, fill, fulfill, bring to completion, finish, bring to an end." In both the KJV and the RSV of Revelation 3:2, this verb is translated "perfect." Born-again believers are "complete" or "perfect" in Christ now because the Holy Spirit is reigning in their lives. But they are growing toward that spiritual state in which their "works" (Greek *erga*, Rev. 3:2) will be as "full," "complete," "perfect" in God's sight as it is possible for Spirit-controlled, fallen human beings to be. The work of the former rain produces continuous spiritual growth.

WHY IS THE FORMER RAIN VITALLY IMPORTANT? (Joel 2:23).

In relation to our discussion of Colossians 2:10, the following two statements are especially significant:

1. *Faithful Christians are complete in Christ now*: "They become partakers of His nature, and day by day grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ. The sanctification of the Spirit is seen in thought, word, and deed. Their ministry is life and salvation to all with whom they associate. Of such ones it is declared, 'Ye are complete in Him.' Colossians 2:10."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 491.

2. *Continuous spiritual growth results in perfection of Christian character*: "Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, 'It is finished.'"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

There is "no stopping place" for spiritual growth, but there is a stopping place for acts of sin. (Compare *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561 with *Early Writings*, p. 71.)

Why would the latter rain be ineffective if the former rain had not fallen? Joel 2:23; Isa. 32:15-17.

The Hebrew of Joel 2:23 may be translated: "He has given to you the early rain for righteousness."

"Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection. . . . There must be a constant development of Christian virtue, a constant advancement in Christian experience. This we should seek with intensity of desire. . . .

"Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. . . . They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. . . . The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. . . . It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 506, 507.

FURTHER STUDY: Relate Romans 8:1-17 to the former-rain work of the Holy Spirit. Read "Pentecost" and "The Gift of the Spirit" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35-56.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A Christian friend tells you that unless you speak in tongues you have not been filled with the Holy Spirit. What answer would you give?
2. A member of the church confides in you that she accepted the advent message without being born again. What steps would you suggest she take to have this experience and to maintain it in the future?
3. Why is it not legalism to believe that we can have the character of Christ and overcome sin as He did?
4. If you were asked how your church could have a genuine spiritual revival, what would you suggest?
5. Why is it dangerous to assume that other people are not enjoying the blessings of the former rain? How can we be sure that we are enjoying those blessings?

SUMMARY: The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the historical beginning of the former rain in the gospel era. The Christian church was launched by an unprecedented bestowal of the Spirit upon the believers. This manifestation was repeated a number of times in the apostolic church. The former rain in individual experience begins with the new birth and continues as the Spirit daily sanctifies the heart. This experience is essential to salvation and essential to reception of the latter rain.



Modern Dorcas of Myanmar

Nancy Bassham

Daw Nambu is an ordinary housewife, living a busy life in Yangon, the capital of Myanmar (Burma). She and her husband have two daughters and three sons.

Her husband is a wealthy businessman. He mines jade; his company is known for producing the highest quality jade in Myanmar. Every month he gives his wife a generous amount of money to pay the bills, run the household, and pay the children's school tuition.

Daw Nambu loves the Lord, and she wants to do something special for Him. Out of her monthly allowance she sets aside an offering for conducting evangelistic campaigns throughout the Myanmar Union Mission. In one month she donated enough to help conduct 10 evangelistic meetings. So far 124 people have been baptized as a result of these evangelistic meetings.

Daw Nambu also helps to pay the salaries of a number of church school teachers and has sponsored students at the Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary who otherwise would not be able to attend an Adventist school. She helps the poor and needy with food, clothes, and other necessities.

Daw Nambu actively witnesses for her faith in person as well as through her giving. She has led her own children to Christ and has won many others to the Lord. In 1993 Daw Nambu helped to build two churches.

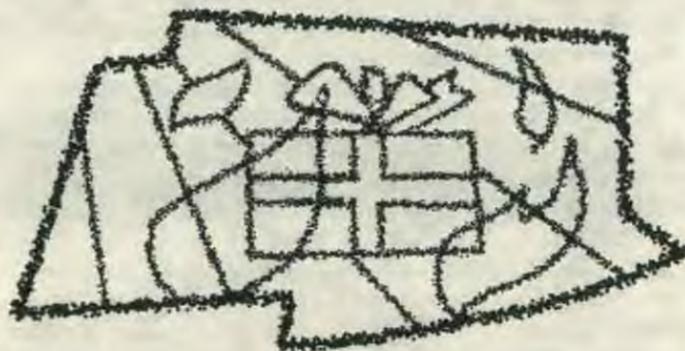
She is indeed a modern Dorcas in Myanmar.



Nancy Bassham is Women's Ministries Director Far Eastern Division.

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The Gifts of the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gal. 5:22-26; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16.

MEMORY TEXT: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Even though the Holy Spirit produces the same spiritual *fruit* in the lives of all believing Christians, because spiritual *gifts* are many and varied, the church, like the human body, comprises a group of interdependent, cooperating members.

THE USEFULNESS OF ONE SURRENDERED LIFE. "One of the most famous legends about the violinist Paganini originated one night in Paris at the height of his popularity. . . . During the concert while tuning his violin, one of the strings snapped. Without bothering to replace it he went on tuning, but a second then a third string broke. A murmur of surprise rippled through the auditorium. Pausing, Paganini announced, 'Ladies and gentlemen, one string and Paganini.' The result is a legend. The master violinist brought from his one-stringed instrument a range of melodies the audience thought impossible. He left the stage amid tumultuous applause.

"One string and Paganini. One surrendered soul and Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit can take your life and mine, can satisfy, fill, and overflow, extending the influence of the Lord Jesus wherever we live and move."—Roy C. Naden, *Your Spiritual Gifts* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Instructional Product Development, 1989), pp. 10, 11.

THE SPIRIT'S FRUIT FOR ALL (Gal. 5:22-26).

The fruit of the Spirit is the Christlike traits of character imparted to all who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

How did Paul contrast the attitudes and behavior of individuals whose fallen natures are ruling, with the attitudes and behavior of those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is reigning? Gal. 5:16-23.

Living by the Spirit means allowing the Holy Spirit to vanquish the unholy desires of our fallen minds and bodies (Gal. 5:16). Failing to live by the Spirit is the reverse: allowing the desires of our fallen natures to sabotage the Spirit's control. Because the "sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit" (verse 16, NIV), when we capitulate to the clamoring of the sinful nature, we deny the Spirit control. Then we think, speak, and act in ways opposite to our best intentions. The latter part of Galatians 5:17 translates: "so that you do not do what you want" (NIV). This is exactly the problem Paul defines in Romans 7:15-23.

"The acts of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:19, NIV) are sinful acts (verses 19-21). When the Holy Spirit controls us, our attitudes and acts are holy: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV).

How many of those who belong to Christ reveal the fruit of the Spirit? Gal. 5:24.

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24, NIV). That being so, the list of unholy attitudes and acts listed in verses 19-21 are excluded from the lives of all "who belong to Christ Jesus." And the fruit of the Spirit (verses 22, 23) is manifested by all committed Christians.

The genius of the gospel is that, because of the cross, Christ develops in believers with vastly different personalities and cultural backgrounds the same beautiful character qualities. Whatever our distinctive spiritual *gifts*, our lives are to reveal the same spiritual *fruit*.

In the light of Paul's instruction (Gal. 5:16-26), under what circumstances does a Christian cease to belong to Christ? (Compare Rom. 8:9.)

YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Some church members are reluctant to become involved in church activities because they feel inferior to those whom they regard as more talented or more consecrated. Because they think that the gifts of others are more valuable than their own, they choose to "take a back seat" or "keep a low profile."

How did Jesus address this problem? Matt. 25:14-30.

"If they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe."

"It was the one with the smallest gift who left his talent unimproved. In this is given a warning to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from service for Christ. If they could do some great thing, how gladly would they undertake it; but because they can serve only in little things, they think themselves justified in doing nothing. In this they err. The Lord in His distribution of gifts is testing character."

"However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 328, 355, 360.

How did Paul illustrate that no spiritual gift is more important than another? 1 Cor. 12:12-27 (compare Rom. 12:3-5; Eph. 4:1-6).

The church is spoken of in Scripture as "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). Paul rejects the argument that our eyes are more important than our ears, or that a foot is less significant than a nose. Some may respond that we can live without an eye, but we cannot live without a heart. Quite so; but the function of the heart would be superfluous if the other parts of the body were absent.

Every believer's gift is important. What spiritual gift can you bring to your church?

HOW AND WHY DO WE RECEIVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS? (Eph. 4:12-16).

Spiritual gifts "are specific abilities given to Christians by the Holy Spirit so we can serve others in nurture and/or outreach."—Roy C. Naden, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, p. 43.

"The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327. As we will see, these special gifts are in addition to, or in some cases further developments of, our natural and acquired abilities. Unbelievers have natural and acquired abilities, but they do not have the special gifts of the Spirit.

According to Paul's counsel in the following passages, how do we receive spiritual gifts? Eph. 4:7-10; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 12:1-3.

Christ's death and resurrection made it possible for Him to bestow greater gifts upon His church than ever before. "Not until after the ascension was the gift [of the Spirit] received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. 'When He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' Eph. 4:8, 7."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

It is inconceivable that anyone can receive the gifts of the Spirit before first obeying the counsel of Romans 12:1, 2 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-3. The discussion of spiritual gifts that follows both passages presupposes the willingness of the reader to submit to Christ's transforming grace.

Why does Christ impart special spiritual gifts to His followers? How does He intend us to use these gifts? Eph. 4:12-16 (compare 1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:9-21).

Nowhere are we told that spiritual gifts are primarily for emotional excitement. Paul indicates that the two major purposes of these gifts are:

- (1) the spiritual nurture of Christ's church ("until we all attain to . . . the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" [Eph. 4:13, RSV]);
- (2) witnessing to unbelievers ("for the work of ministry" [Eph. 4:12, RSV]).

QUALITIES THAT QUALIFY (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Paul's lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-9; 1 Cor. 12:8-11, 28-31; Eph. 4:11) include both spiritual qualities and specialized ministries. Obviously none of the lists is exhaustive. As specific needs arise in the church, the Holy Spirit equips those whom He wishes to fulfill the needs.

Note the spiritual qualities that Paul includes in the following two lists of the Spirit's gifts: Romans 12:6-9; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. How would you illustrate the use of each gift in the apostolic church?

1. Exhortation (Rom. 12:8): The Greek word means "encouragement," "comfort," "consolation." (See 1 Thess. 2:11, 12.)

2. Mercy (Rom. 12:8): The Greek word means "to have mercy or pity," "to show mercy," "to do acts of mercy." (See 2 Tim. 1:16-18.)

3. Wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8): Paul refers to the wisdom that God imparts. (See 1 Cor. 2:6-8.)

4. Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8): Paul means the knowledge of Christ and of God that believers are to impart to others. (See 2 Cor. 10:5; Rom. 15:14.)

5. Faith (1 Cor. 12:9): Paul refers to confidence in God, true piety, genuine religion, faithfulness, reliability, recognition and acceptance of Christian teaching. (See 1 Thess. 1:3, 8.)

6. "Discerning of spirits" or spiritual insight (1 Cor. 12:10): This gift is the ability to distinguish between truth and error. It includes the capacity to identify, on the basis of God's Word, teachers who are of God and those who are not. (See 1 John 4:1-6; Rev. 2:6.)

Every genuine Christian, regardless of gender and race, possesses these qualities to some extent. But not every Christian has the specialized ability of which Paul is speaking. The person having the spiritual gift of encouragement is able to achieve more in this direction than those who do not possess this gift. Some believers have special wisdom beyond that of others. All have faith, but some are distinguished by their *outstanding* faith.

SPIRIT-DIRECTED MINISTRIES (1 Cor. 12:9-11, 28-30).

List the Spirit-directed ministries that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:9-11 and 28-30. Beside this list, match the ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 and Romans 12:6-8. Note that Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 refer to some gifts not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:

1 Cor. 12:9-11, 28-30	Eph. 4:11	Rom. 12:6-8

We will define these gifts in alphabetic order:

Apostles (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): Apostles chosen by Christ, but in the broad sense, anyone who is an ambassador for Christ—one who is sent, a delegate, messenger, envoy, missionary. (See Phil. 2:25; "messenger" KJV = apostle.)

Contributors (Rom. 12:8, "he that giveth," KJV): Those who give for others and the advancement of the gospel.

Evangelists (Eph. 4:11): Preachers of the gospel.

Healers (1 Cor. 12:9, 28): All those who minister to the physically sick.

Helpers (1 Cor. 12:28), or servers (Romans 12:7, "ministry," KJV): Those who render practical assistance; for example, deacons and deaconesses.

Leaders (Rom. 12:8, "he that ruleth," KJV; 1 Cor. 12:28, "governments"): Administrators whose responsibility is to superintend and manage.

Miracle workers (1 Cor. 12:28): Those through whom the Spirit does supernatural things. (See Acts 3:5-8.)

Pastors (Eph. 4:11): Ordained ministers (shepherds) and all those who nurture the flock spiritually.

Prophets (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; Eph. 4:11): Those to whom God grants special revelations, and those who instruct the church. (See 1 Cor. 14:5.) Seventh-day Adventists believe that the prophetic gift was given to Ellen G. White in fulfillment of Revelation 12:17 (compare Rev. 19:10).

Teachers (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): Those who give instruction from God's Word.

Tongues speakers (1 Cor. 12:10, 28): The gift of speaking the truth in languages that, when interpreted, edify the church. (See 1 Cor. 14:5; Acts 2:4, 11.)

Tongues interpreters (1 Cor. 12:10, 30): Those with the ability to translate and explain the message presented in a language not understood by the hearers. (See 1 Cor. 14:27, 28.)

FURTHER STUDY: Study the teaching of 1 Corinthians 14 on the gift of tongues. As you consider the meaning of the chapter, note the following:

The word *unknown* (1 Cor. 14:2, 4, 14) is not in the Greek text. First Corinthians 14:14 may be translated: "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit [mind] prays, but my thought [meaning] is fruitless." The word *spirit* (Greek: *pneuma*) as used in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint, LXX) and in the Greek New Testament often means mind, or includes mind. (See LXX of Exod. 28:3; Deut. 34:9; 1 Chron. 28:12; Job 20:3; and Matt. 26:41; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11.) The word *mind* (Greek *nous*) often means "thought," or "meaning." (See LXX of Isa. 40:13, Joshua 14:7, and Rom. 1:28; 11:34; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2:16.) The genuinely Spirit-filled Corinthian who spoke in tongues understood what he was saying; his mind was operative. But his thought or meaning was profitless, because no one else understood—unless someone interpreted the language. The Spirit-filled speaker was not experiencing an uncontrollable ecstatic state in which his mind was inoperative while his feelings were in control.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why are some spiritual gifts that Paul lists not seen in the church today? What other gifts that Paul does not list can you see being employed?
2. If you do not know your distinctive spiritual gifts, what might be the problem? How can you discover your gifts?

SUMMARY: The fruit of the Spirit is not the same as the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit's fruit applies to the elements of Christlike character enjoyed by all committed Christians. The gifts of the Spirit are talents or abilities bestowed upon us for service to others. These gifts may involve an intensification of already existing talents, or they may be abilities that we did not have before.



The Donut-shaped Cloud

J. H. Gate

A group of youth went to an unentered area on a nearby island in the South Pacific to conduct meetings. After receiving permission from the leaders, the youth gathered jungle materials and built a shelter in which to hold public meetings.

It was hard work in the tropical sun. They set up heavy poles to support the walls and roof, then tied smaller poles in place for the frame of the building. They covered the walls with woven mats and placed a platform and benches inside the building.

Villagers gathered for the meeting that evening. The next morning the youth discovered that someone had torn down their building. Only a pile of materials remained. With great effort they rebuilt their shelter in time for the evening meeting. But the following morning their hall was again in ruins. Again they rebuilt it. This happened two more days. On the fifth morning, the group found only ashes.

There was no time to gather new materials and rebuild. The young people prayed for wisdom and help. An elderly gentleman approached. "I am sorry that my people have treated you this way. Come. I have materials at my home, and room for a building. I will help you." With praises to God, they built a new building.

The local religious leader who had ordered some ruffians to burn the building thought the youth would leave the village. When he saw the new building he called the rough youth together. He gave each a bamboo torch. "Burn it to the ground," he ordered.

The Voice of Youth team heard of the plot; they rushed to the new hall and climbed onto the roof. As light from the torches encircled them, they pleaded for God's protection.

Then, one by one the torches began to go out. It was raining all around them, but not on their little church. The rain fell from a donut-shaped cloud above the meeting hall! News of the miracle spread through the village. Many were convinced of God's presence in the cloud and in the meetings the youth were conducting.

Today this village has a church.

This is the spirit of Global Mission. As courageous members press into new areas, the Lord leads them and protects them.



J. H. Gate, ministerial secretary in the South Pacific Division, told this story to James Zachary (left), associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association.

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How Jesus Enables Us to Receive the Latter Rain



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Jer. 3:13-15; Joel 2:12-17; Acts 1:8, 14; 4:32.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments” (Joel 2:12, 13, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: We are prepared for the latter rain when we are enjoying the fullness of the former rain's blessings.

“A REVIVAL OF TRUE GODLINESS AMONG US IS THE GREATEST AND MOST URGENT OF ALL OUR NEEDS. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God's Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the Word; but when the Spirit's power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121.

CONFESSION (Jer. 3:13-15).

What is the inevitable result when people attempt to conceal their sins? Prov. 28:13 (compare Isa. 29:15; 30:1).

The philosophy or attitude that God will save us in our sins is one of the insurmountable barriers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (See Matt. 1:21.) God's Spirit and sin cannot coexist in a human heart. Even though we remain fallen and regularly experience natural urges to sin, our unholy propensities can be surrendered to the controlling, empowering Holy Spirit. Refusal to face up to one's personal sin problem, refusal to admit that certain modes of thought and behavior are arresting our spiritual growth, renders it impossible for the Lord to give us the former rain in its fullness.

"When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgement of his guilt he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that if it had not been for certain circumstances, he would not have done this or that for which he is reproved. But the examples in God's word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 641.

What wonderful promises does the Lord give to those who acknowledge their guilt and confess their sins? Jer. 3:13-15, 17, 18.

Spiritual restoration is followed ultimately by eternal restoration. As the Lord pleaded with His people in Jeremiah's day, so He pleads with us. They were in danger of being engulfed by literal Babylon; we face the possibility of absorption by spiritual Babylon. The promises made to ancient Israel on condition of heartfelt confession are now available to spiritual Israel.

"Today you are to have your vessel purified, that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement.

"It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."
—*Evangelism*, p. 702.

THE HUMBLING OF OUR HEARTS (Acts 4:32).

When Jesus' disciples were constantly in conflict over who was to be the most important leader in the church, how did Jesus teach them humility?

Matt. 23:8-12 _____

Mark 9:33-37 _____

Luke 22:24-27 _____

John 13:3-17 _____

As long as the disciples were attempting to climb over one another's shoulders to the highest place in the kingdom, Christ could not prepare them for the crises ahead. They were tragically unready for His arrest and trial, and totally unprepared for the humiliation of seeing their Leader nailed to a cross. Little else disqualifies for service in Christ's cause as effectively as does selfish ambition.

What dramatic change among Christ's followers made it possible for Him to pour the former rain upon them? Acts 4:32.

"Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away,"—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 20.

"Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.

Early in 1903, Ellen White described a vision she had received in 1902 depicting what might have happened at the 1901 General Conference session. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 104-106.) In vision she saw church members humbly making things right with one another and with the Lord. There was a time of great revival and rejoicing. "The words were spoken to me: 'This might have been. All this the Lord was waiting to do for His people.'" But it did not happen.

Pray that it will happen in our day.

REPENTANCE (Joel 2:12-17).

Why is repentance a prerequisite to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Joel 2:12-19; Hosea 6:1-3.

Returning to the Lord with "fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12, RSV) does not mean that we induce repentance by self-imposed grieving. Mourning is not the means of genuine repentance; it is the result of repentance. As we come to the Lord, earnestly seeking a change of heart, He gives us repentance as a gift (Rom. 2:4). Repentance is sorrow for sin and turning away from it. Luther said, "To do so no more is the truest repentance."

Joel instructed Israel's spiritual leaders to call the people together for worship and communal repentance (Joel 2:15-17). How appropriate for us is the prayer, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations" (Joel 2:17, RSV)!

Why should Christ's followers live in a constant state of repentance? Acts 26:20; Gal. 5:16.

Ongoing repentance does not involve continual mourning for past sins; it is constantly turning to Christ as the One who can deliver from sin. "At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen. . . . We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 160, 161.

What special promises does the Lord make to the genuinely repentant? Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19.

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of 'refreshing' and the 'latter rain' to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! . . . I saw that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence."—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

PRAYER (Acts 1:14).

What example of prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit was set by Christ's first disciples? Acts 1:14; 8:15.

"In solemn awe they bowed in prayer, repeating the assurance, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' . . . Higher and still higher they extended the hand of faith, with the mighty argument, 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' . . .

"The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35-37.

Notice, it was not prayer for an emotional experience; it was prayer for the spiritual fitness that only the Holy Spirit can produce.

According to Zechariah, when should we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Zech. 10:1. How insistent should be our prayers? Luke 11:5-13.

Can anyone doubt that we are living in the time of the latter rain? The signs Jesus outlines in Matthew 24 are appearing in rapid succession. By means of the latter rain, the Lord will fulfill to spiritual Israel the encouraging assurances He gave through the prophet Zechariah: "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them; for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them" (Zech. 10:6, RSV). This is the result of prevailing prayer!

"The circumstances may seem to be favorable for a rich outpouring of the showers of grace. But God Himself must command the rain to fall. Therefore we should not be remiss in supplication. We are not to trust to the ordinary working of providence. We must pray that God will unseal the fountain of the water of life. And we must ourselves receive the living water. Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 509.

"Let Christians . . . ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come."—*Evangelism*, p. 701.

How can you encourage the members of your church to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

WILLINGNESS TO WITNESS (Acts 1:8).

Christ promises to bestow the Holy Spirit upon His people in a greater measure than ever before in history. "The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the former rain, and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant."—*Evangelism*, p. 701. But this wonderful gift will not be evidenced by great outbursts of uncontrolled emotion. The two major purposes for the gift of the Spirit are:

1. Our spiritual fitness.
2. Power for witnessing.

What did Jesus foresee His disciples would do after receiving the former rain? Acts 1:8.

Jesus visualized a global mission motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The first-century believers were to take the gospel message "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV). Did they fulfill their commission? (See Acts 4:33; 5:20, 21; 8:4; 22:15; Col. 1:23.)

Because they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Christ's followers were transformed in character. They were poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith and spiritual power. Rejected by the great of this world, they nonetheless proclaimed the gospel with impressive eloquence and unabated zeal. The burden of their message was the saving power of the crucified and risen Christ. (See *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 67.)

"Through the cooperation of the divine Spirit the labors of the humble men whom Christ had chosen stirred the world. To every nation under heaven was the gospel carried in a single generation."—*Education*, pp. 95, 96.

To how many of earth's inhabitants must the three angels' messages be taken? Rev. 14:6. What is the responsibility of every believer? Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20.

"The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lightens the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God."—*Christian Service*, p. 253.

FURTHER STUDY: On the importance of repentance for those who would enter into fellowship with God, study the following passages: Ezek. 18:31; Hosea 14:2; Matt. 3:2; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30. Read "Calls for a Revival" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 121-128.

"If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 419.

"The church must arouse to action. The Spirit of God can never come in until she prepares the way. There should be earnest searching of heart. There should be united, persevering prayer, and through faith a claiming of the promises of God. There should be, not a clothing of the body with sackcloth, as in ancient times, but a deep humiliation of soul. We have not the first reason for self-congratulation and self-exaltation. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. He will appear to comfort and bless the true seekers."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 126.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A friend in the church tells you that she confesses her sins every night but commits the same kind of sins again the next day. How would you help her?
2. Do you think the Lord plans to wait until everyone in the church has adequately fulfilled the conditions before giving the latter rain? Why do you think as you do? (See *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 122.)
3. When you read that willingness to witness is a prerequisite to receiving the latter rain, do you feel somewhat fearful? In what ways can you use your special talents in witnessing, even though you feel you cannot speak in public?

SUMMARY: The Lord gives the Holy Spirit in both former- and latter-rain power in His own way and in His own time. But He asks us to place ourselves in the mainstream of His power by (1) confessing our sins; (2) allowing Him to humble our hearts; (3) receiving His gift of repentance; (4) seeking Him regularly in prayer; (5) being willing to allow His Spirit to use us as witnesses to others.



Excuses

Cathie Jolly

I've cried today (and it's not the first time) for the Mongolian young people. Let me share with you why I've cried.

Candace* whispers to me during a meeting that when her older brother learns that she has come to meet with us, she will be beaten. As she leaves, she asks us pray for her, but the pleading in her eyes says much more than her words.

Tabitha's* father died ten years ago, leaving a large Buddhist family. Tabitha types for us, and I think the meal we serve her when she works is often her only meal that day.

The Buddhist lamas exercise great control over Tabitha's family. Recently a lama told them that they must move because too many people have died within their yard. They must allow an old relative to live with them because she has an angry Buddha idol that they can appease. An older sister's spirit has left, meaning she will die unless the lamas can "call" the spirit back (for a fee). After the encounter with the lama, Tabitha's mother forbade her to attend our meetings anymore. She is devastated.

Esther* is 18 years old and lives with her uncle so she can work in a hospital laboratory. Since she first came to our worship services less than five months ago, her aunt and uncle have fought with her over her belief in Jesus. Last night when she arrived home, the tirade began. She thought to herself, "I can take this. Jesus loves me." She held tightly to a tiny heart-shaped eraser with the words "Jesus loves you" on it.

Worn down by her uncle's tirade, Tabitha finally agreed not to come to the meetings anymore. When her uncle left the room, she sat sobbing, "Jesus, I love you." She opened her hand and looked at the eraser. She wept, "Like Judas I have betrayed my Lord." Tabitha has a terminal illness. When she went for her treatment, she talked with Him through her pain.

So, what keeps you from church? Is it boring? Do you need the extra sleep? Is it a beating? Your pride? Young people in Mongolia wouldn't for a second accept those excuses! They know that when Jesus comes, there will be no excuses!



Cathie Jolly, with her husband, Brad, are Adventist Frontier missionaries in Mongolia. *Names of the three teens have been changed.

Sealed by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Eph. 1:13, 14; 5:27; Rev. 6:9-11; 14:1-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: We receive the *initial* seal of the Holy Spirit when we are born again. The Spirit's *end-time* seal is given a short time before the close of probation to those who are overcoming by dependence upon Christ. (See *Early Writings*, p. 71.)

PREPARATION FOR THE END-TIME SEAL OF GOD is the same process as preparation for the latter rain.

"Not one of us will ever receive *the seal of God* while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then *the latter rain* will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 214. (Italics supplied.)

We "remedy the defects in our characters" by constant dependence upon Christ, constant submission to the Holy Spirit's reign in our hearts. When this experience is habitual to us and, thus, our soul temples have been purified of sin, we will receive the end-time seal of God and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power.

SEALED BY THE NEW BIRTH (Eph. 1:13, 14).

What does the Holy Spirit do for those who believe in Christ? Eph. 1:13, 14 (compare Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22).

The Greek verb translated "to seal" (*sphragizo*) may refer to fastening or securing a place, a building, or a tomb (Matt. 27:66). As long as we retain the Holy Spirit's ruling presence, He seals our hearts so that the evil one cannot overcome us (1 John 3:9; 5:18). The verb *to seal* may also mean to mark with a seal as a means of identification. The Holy Spirit "establishes us . . . in Christ" by putting His seal upon our hearts (2 Cor. 1:21, 22, RSV). We are now identified as belonging to Christ (Rom. 8:9). The verb *to seal* may also mean to certify, attest, or acknowledge authority, or ownership, as a seal does when it is placed on a document. The Father's seal upon the Son (John 6:27) certifies that the Son belongs to the Father and has His authority. The Holy Spirit in our hearts establishes not only that we belong to God but also that we have His certification of eternal life because He shares His character with us (John 3:36; Rom. 8:10).

The Holy Spirit is the "guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it" (Eph. 1:14, RSV). The word *guarantee* (Greek: *arrabon*) means "first instalment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance, and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid; . . . in any case, *arrabon* is a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments."—Arndt and Gingrich, *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 109.

What a magnificent thought that, because we have the presence of the Spirit in our hearts, we have the first installment of the eternal life that will finally be bestowed upon us when Jesus comes! (See John 5:24.)

When are we first sealed by the Holy Spirit? John 3:5-8. How can we retain this seal? Gal. 5:16, 18, 22-24.

Receiving and retaining the new-birth experience is the same as receiving the former rain. This initial seal of the Spirit is vital to reception of the final seal of the Spirit when the latter rain is poured upon us. "Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD VINDICATED (Rev. 6:9-11).

The pre-advent, investigative judgment in heaven vindicates the righteous dead on the basis of their fellowship with Christ at the time of death. The same judgment vindicates living believers who are enjoying the blessings of the former rain. This vindication is prerequisite to the living believer's reception of the end-time seal of God and the latter rain. (See Dan. 7:9-14; 12:1.)

In connection with Revelation 6:9-11, consider the following questions. What altar did John see? Who are the souls depicted as under the altar? Why are they pleading for God to judge and avenge them? What happens when they are judged? How close to the end of time does this judgment occur?

The altar is the altar of burnt offering in the court of the sanctuary. The vision is of people who have been sacrificed. The only place where Israelites were to offer sacrifices was at the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 17:1-8). In the offering of animal sacrifices, the excess blood was poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30). The blood represented life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10, 11; Deut. 12:23). The blood poured at the base of the altar symbolized the blood of Christ (Ps. 22:14; Isa. 53:12) and the blood of faithful martyrs (Phil. 3:10).

What is the martyrs' cry? "How long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10, RSV). Though asleep in their graves, their blood cries from the ground that they have not yet been judged or vindicated. (See Gen. 4:10.) Many martyrs were put to death in the early Christian centuries and during the Middle Ages. In modern times many have laid down their lives for Christ. But they were not judged and vindicated at the time of their death.

What happens when they are judged? "They were each given a white robe" (verse 11, RSV). The robe here represents vindication in the heavenly judgment. This is a fulfillment of Daniel 7:22, "Judgment was rendered in favor of the holy ones of the Most High" (JPS).

When are they judged? They are told to "rest a little longer" (verse 11, RSV). They are soon to be awakened from their sleep at the coming of Jesus. (See 1 Cor. 15:51-54.)

Revelation 6:9-11 clearly establishes that there is a heavenly pre-advent judgment, which decides who among the dead can be given eternal vindication.

How do we prepare for vindication in the pre-advent judgment?

LIVING BELIEVERS MADE COMPLETE (Rev. 6:11).

What is to happen on earth before the righteous dead are raised? Rev. 6:11.

The verse translates literally from the Greek text: "And a white robe was given to each of them, and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little time, until their fellow servants and their brethren, who are about to be killed as they were, *might be made complete.*" Most translations speak of a "number" of living believers being put to death before the dead are raised. But the word "number" does not occur in the Greek text, nor is the making up of a number a necessary connotation of the Greek verb (*pleroo*) that we have translated "might be made complete." (The connotation "to complete a number" is not characteristic of the Septuagint [Greek Old Testament] usage, nor is the verb ever used in the New Testament with that meaning.) The verb means "to make full, to fill, fulfill, to complete, finish something already begun."

The New Testament often uses this verb in contexts that mean God's will is to be perfectly fulfilled in and by believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit. (See Rom. 8:4; 2 Cor. 10:5, 6; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 3:19; 5:18; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 2:10; 2 Thess. 1:11; Rev. 3:2; see Lesson 9.)

When and how are the living brothers and sisters of the dead saints made complete in Christ? Compare Rev. 6:11 and 19:7, 8.

Notice the context of Revelation 19:7, 8. The judgment is finished, for "he has *judged* the great harlot . . . and he has *avenged* on her the blood of his servants" (Rev. 19:2, RSV). The work of judging and avenging for which the dead are represented as praying is now finished. The people of God have been exonerated and their enemies condemned. Just as in Revelation 6:10, 11 the faithful dead were judged worthy of vindication (white robes), so in Revelation 19 the Lamb's living "Bride" (RSV) is granted this gift. This heavenly gift enables God to consider the deeds of the bride righteous (verse 8). The process by which she made ready was the process of appropriating the gift, the end result of which is "righteous deeds" (verse 8, RSV). At the end of the judgment (verse 2), the bride is ready (verse 7); her deeds are judged wholly righteous (verse 8). The marriage ceremony of the Lamb (the judgment) is completed (verse 7).

How can we receive Christ's righteousness every day?

SEALED BY CHRIST'S CHARACTER (Rev. 14:1-5).

The sealing of Christ's end-time people (Rev. 7:1-8) does not occur after the second coming of Jesus, described in Revelation 6:12-17. God's people are sealed when they are finally made complete in Christ (Rev. 6:11). At the second advent the sealed believers are the only ones able to stand with unshaken confidence in Christ. Revelation 7:1-8 answers the question in Revelation 6:17.

What is represented by the seal placed in the foreheads of Christ's faithful living people? Rev. 7:1-3; 14:1.

By Christ's grace, the living believers will be obeying all His commandments, including the Sabbath command. They will be sealed before the winds of strife are let loose (Rev. 7:1-3), that is, before the close of probation. Ellen White wrote: "Reference to our published works will show our belief that the living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 66.

John declares that the seal of God placed in the foreheads of the living righteous is "his name and his Father's name" (Rev. 14:1, RSV). Christ's name and the Father's name symbolize their character. (See Isa. 43:7; 50:10; 57:15.) How does Christ reproduce His character in us? By bestowing the Holy Spirit upon us (Rom. 8:9, 10).

"The pure and holy garments are not prepared to be put on by any one *after* he has entered the gate of the city. All who enter will have on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and the name of God will be seen in their foreheads. This name is the symbol which the apostle saw in vision, and signifies the yielding of the mind to intelligent and loyal obedience to all of God's commandments."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 370.

What will be the spiritual condition of those who receive the seal of God? Rev. 14:5.

"Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 216.

VICTORIOUS AND GROWING (Eph. 5:27).

How does the New Testament emphasize the spiritual goal toward which every committed Christian is moving?

Eph. 1:4 _____

Eph. 5:27 _____

Col. 1:22 _____

Jude 24 _____

Each of these verses uses the same Greek word that occurs in Revelation 14:5: "for they are *spotless*" (RSV). The Greek word translated "spotless" (*amomos*) also means "unblemished, blameless, faultless."

"The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. *The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.* Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon's roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. 'A fair miter' is set upon their heads.

"While Satan has been urging his accusations, holy angels, unseen, have been passing to and fro, placing upon the faithful ones the seal of the living God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 591 (italics supplied).

Even though God's sealed people are "nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world," will they continue to be tempted and tried? Until when will we have fallen natures to be subdued? Phil. 3:20, 21.

The Bible teaches that God's sealed people will have victory over sin. It also teaches that they remain fallen human beings with natural biases toward sin until Jesus comes—sinful biases that are subdued by the Holy Spirit.

"We cannot say, 'I am sinless' till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, complete in Christ, robed in His righteousness and perfection."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 361.

FURTHER STUDY: On the goal of spiritual victory through the power of Christ, see the following: 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; Rev. 3:2-5. Read "The Seal of God" in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 207-216 (see also pp. 475, 476).

"No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions. . . .

"It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. . . .

"Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men and women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 215, 216.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A Christian friend tells you that, because he has received Christ as Lord and Saviour, complete obedience to the Ten Commandments is not necessary. In fact, he says that the idea of complete obedience is legalism. How would you answer him?
2. Since Christ's true followers are "complete" in Him now (Col. 2:10), why should any further spiritual growth be necessary? Why should the Lord say to His tempted people, "Be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15, RSV)?
3. If you were asked to summarize the means by which fallen, sinful human beings can prepare for the end-time seal of God, what would you say?

SUMMARY: The new-birth experience is the initial seal of the Holy Spirit. God's purpose is to mold His believing people spiritually so that His Spirit is continually reigning in their hearts and His truth is their perpetual delight. Then He will give them the end-time seal of the Spirit, and they will be Christ's for eternity.



A Woman of Distinction

Maye Porter

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), an island north of Australia, women are often not valued as equal with men. But well-trained and capable women such as Merrilyn Andon, a theology graduate from Sonoma Adventist College and PNG Union Mission's child ministries director, are making a positive impact in the field.

Children are drawn to her kindly ways; older women respect her ability and opinions; and the men, who at first were skeptical of a woman in a male-dominated workplace, admire her professional abilities, and her devotion to duty. When Merrilyn voices her opinion on a subject, people listen.

Laughing at physical inconveniences, Merrilyn travels around the islands of her territory via mission plane, dugout canoe, car, or even the occasional bicycle or tractor and trailer, ministering to children and training the adults who guide them.

Merrilyn teaches practical methods in Christian parenting, family worship, and Christian education. She emphasizes the need for Bibles and Sabbath School lesson books for each child, for Sabbath School rooms in churches, and trained leaders and teachers for the children, for money to buy quarterly supplies, and for baptismal classes in places where the idea of spiritual nurturing for children is new.

But she weeps when she sees children who have no place to meet, no lessons to study, no teachers to teach them, and no pastor who is aware of their needs. She pleads on behalf of the children, and the church leaders respond. The number of children in Sabbath School classes has doubled in the past few years, and orders for Sabbath School supplies have increased.

Churches are providing rooms for children's classes. Parents are practicing new skills in child training. Pastors are developing skills to lead children to the Saviour while they are still young. Outreach activities include the children, who now have their own Sabbath School lessons.

God, who especially loves children, continues to bless Merrilyn and her colleagues who work with Him.



Merrilyn Andon (left) is Child Ministries director in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. Maye Porter is Women's Ministries Director in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission of the South Pacific Division.

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The Latter Rain



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Jer. 5:18-31; Joel 2:28-32; Rev. 18:1-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory" (Revelation 18:1).

KEY THOUGHT: The latter rain is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with unprecedented power. This gift prepares the church for the final proclamation of the gospel and for the time of trouble.

THE LATTER RAIN PREPARES GOD'S PEOPLE FOR THE ADVENT. "The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. . . . The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ. . . ."

"It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it."
—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 506, 507.

WHY HAVE WE NOT HAD THE LATTER RAIN? (Jer. 5:18-31).

What promise and warning did the Lord give ancient Israel through Moses? Deut. 11:13-17.

Rain is essential to agricultural prosperity. As we observed in Lesson 8, the Lord promised both the early and latter rains as long as His people were willing to obey Him. The Lord linked the prosperity of His people to their willingness to fellowship with Him and to do His will.

Why did the Lord speak such stern words of rebuke through Jeremiah? Jer. 3:1-3; 5:18-31. Are we in any way repeating the sins of ancient Israel?

Spiritual adultery was rampant in ancient Israel. Leaders and people were honoring false gods and counselors. Dishonesty, impurity, unbridled ambition, manipulation of others for one's personal advantage, and ethical, moral, and spiritual indecency of all varieties afflicted God's professed people. With infinite sorrow the Lord exclaimed: "Therefore the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come" (Jer. 3:3, RSV). "But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. They do not say in their hearts, Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain" (Jer. 5:23, 24, RSV).

What challenging counsel do the prophets give those who are longing for the latter rain? Hosea 5:15; 6:3; Joel 1:12-18; 2:23, 28.

"There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. . . . When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come. . . . Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from the assemblies of His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises. Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, 'not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts' (Zech. 4:6)."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 124.

WHEN WILL WE RECEIVE THE LATTER RAIN? (Joel 2:28-32).

According to the prophet Joel, at what period in history will the latter rain occur? Joel 2:28-32.

Notice that Joel has the latter rain occurring *before* the final signs of Christ's coming. The "portents in the heavens and on the earth" are followed immediately by deliverance at the Lord's coming for those who call upon Him. "Those who escape" are the "survivors" who have responded to the Lord's call by pleading with Him for deliverance (Joel 2:32, RSV).

Joel speaks of a dark day "before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Joel 2:31, RSV). When does this dark day occur? Isa. 13:9-11; Ezek. 32:5-8.

Israel experienced days of the Lord when, because of their unfaithfulness, their enemies were permitted to attack them. These local days of the Lord were types or examples of the great end-time day of the Lord when Jesus will appear. The darkness of the local days of the Lord pointed forward to the darkness that will envelop the earth immediately before Jesus' second advent. The historical dark day, May 19, 1780, foreshadowed the time immediately before Jesus' coming when "a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 636.

Compare Revelation 6:11-17 with Joel 2:28-32.

Joel places the final great outpouring of the Holy Spirit shortly before the events that announce Christ's appearing. John depicts the righteous dead being judged and the living believers being made spiritually complete just before the events associated with Jesus' coming. As we saw in last week's lesson, when God's people are spiritually complete, they receive the end-time seal of the Holy Spirit (Rev. 7:1-3; 14:1-5). Thus Joel and John are speaking of the same events: the seal of God and the latter rain given to those who have repented of sin and have submitted to the cleansing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

How is your friendship with Jesus growing in preparation for the latter-rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

THE LATTER RAIN UPON GOD'S PEOPLE (Joel 2:28, 29).

What particular phenomena will occur when the latter rain is given? Joel 2:28, 29 (compare Acts 2).

Old and young, all God's faithful ones around the world will be imbued with spiritual gifts that will enable them to witness for Christ. As on the Day of Pentecost, barriers and restraints will be cast off as the Spirit inspires them to uplift the crucified and risen Saviour to those dying in sin. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1055.)

What does the outpouring of the Spirit do for the spiritual life of God's people? 2 Cor. 3:18 (compare Rom. 8:1-4, 29).

Describing the effect of the latter rain, Ellen White wrote: "The company of guardian angels around them had been doubled, *and they were clothed with an armor from their head to their feet.* They moved in exact order, like a company of soldiers. Their countenances expressed the severe conflict which they had endured, the agonizing struggle they had passed through. Yet their features, marked with severe internal anguish, now shone with the light and glory of heaven. *They had obtained the victory, and it called forth from them the deepest gratitude and holy, sacred joy.*

"The numbers of this company had lessened. Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks. *Evil angels still pressed around them, but could have no power over them.*

"I heard those clothed with the armor speak forth the truth with great power. It had effect. Many had been bound; some wives by their husbands, and some children by their parents. The honest who had been prevented from hearing the truth now eagerly laid hold upon it. All fear of their relatives was gone, and the truth alone was exalted to them. They had been hungering and thirsting for truth; it was dearer and more precious than life. I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, 'It is the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel.'" —*Early Writings*, p. 271 (italics supplied).

"THE EARTH WAS LIGHTENED WITH HIS GLORY" (Rev. 18:1).

How will the earth be "lightened" with the glory of Christ shortly before His advent? Rev. 18:1.

The Greek word translated "glory" (*doxa*) occurs 168 times in the New Testament. In the majority of instances it refers to the glorious character of Christ and the Father, which is bestowed upon those who believe. For example:

John 1:14—Christ's glory is grace and truth.

John 7:18—Christ's glory is the opposite of falsehood.

John 17:22—The glory of Christ's character unites His disciples.

Rom. 3:23—God's glory is the opposite of sin.

Rom. 5:2-5—We rejoice because we can share God's glory.

1 Cor. 10:31—All our behavior is to glorify God.

2 Cor. 3:18—The glory of Christ's character is given to us progressively by the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor. 4:5, 6—Christ's glory shines in our hearts.

Eph. 1:6—God's glory is His grace.

Eph. 3:16, 17—The riches of Christ's glory are given us by the Holy Spirit.

Phil. 1:11—God's glory includes the "fruits of righteousness" (RSV).

2 Thess. 2:13, 14—"Sanctification by the Spirit" results in "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (RSV).

2 Peter 1:3—Godliness is Christ's glory.

What, then, is the glory that is to be taken around the world? It is the righteousness, holiness, purity, grace, godliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who takes this glory to the world? The Holy Spirit living out the life of Jesus in those who have received both the former and the latter rains takes this glory to the world.

"The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third angel's message is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of worldwide extent and unwonted [unusual] power is here foretold. . . .

"The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. . . .

"The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. . . .

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.

THE MESSAGE EMPOWERED BY THE LATTER RAIN (Rev. 18:2-5).

Identify specific elements included in the gospel message that will be taken to the world by those who receive the latter rain. Rev. 18:2-5.

This message is a repetition of the second angel's message of Revelation 14:8. Modern "Babylon" has become blatantly apostate, turning away from God's truth to accept: (1) a false day of worship; (2) the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, involving the teachings of spiritism; (3) de-emphasis of Christ's mediatorial and judgment ministries. The second and third angels' messages are combined in the church's final great proclamation to the world. (See Rev. 14:9-12.)

But it is impossible to counteract the false teachings of modern "Babylon" without presenting the positive first angel's message of Revelation 14:6, 7. The "everlasting gospel" of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is the heart of the message to be taken to the world under the impetus of the latter rain. Christ crucified, risen, ascended to heaven, ministering the merits of His sacrifice for repentant sinners; Christ the divine Judge and Advocate; Christ the Lord of the Sabbath; Christ the coming King—these are the sacred themes that will be sounded with solemn earnestness by the Spirit-filled believers who receive the latter rain.

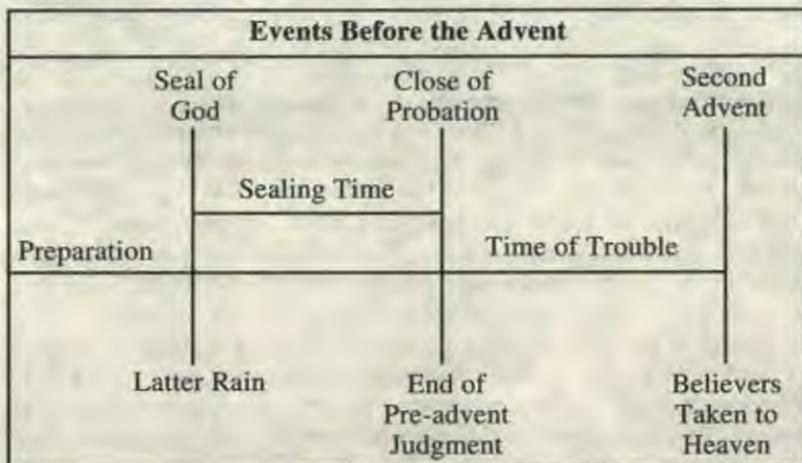
Who are "my people" whom God calls to come out of "Babylon" (Rev. 18:4)? John 10:16. What does the parable of the laborers in the vineyard tell us about the experience that will be theirs when they respond to God's call? Matt. 20:1-15.

"Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion. . . .

"Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

Are you ready to extend the final invitation to your neighbors?

FURTHER STUDY: In relation to the foregoing lessons, reread Revelation 6:9-8:5; 14:1-20; 17:1-6; 18:1-5. Read "The Final Warning" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612, and "Pray for the Latter Rain" in *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 506-512. Study the following chart:



We are living in the preparation time that will culminate in the faithful's receiving the seal of God and the latter rain. After the initial outpouring of the latter rain, there will be a short period during which the final message is taken to the world. Those who respond to Christ's call will receive the seal of God and the latter rain and join in the proclamation of the message. This short sealing time comes to an end with the close of probation, at which time the heavenly pre-advent judgment is brought to a conclusion. After the close of probation, God's Spirit-filled people will live through the time of trouble. Although the Holy Spirit will empower them to keep from sinning, the devil will attempt to discourage them with the thought that, because they have been sinners, they are lost. When the time of trouble concludes, at earth's darkest midnight, the final signs of Christ's coming will appear in the heavens and the earth. Then Jesus will come to destroy the wicked and translate His faithful people to the heavenly kingdom.

SUMMARY: When God's people allow Jesus to prepare their hearts, the latter rain will be given. This final, unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God's church will occur a short time before the close of probation and the final events of this earth's history. When God's people receive the latter rain they will genuinely reflect the character of Christ. Filled with the Spirit, they will take the final message of love and warning to the world.



Too Many Children

Arlene Webb

"Rustico, you must go live with your aunt and uncle. Father's income cannot feed all of us." With those words 8-year-old Rustico left his 11 brothers and sisters and went to live with his mother's sister, who had only three children of her own.

Rustico was Catholic, and he thought of becoming a priest. When Adventists held evangelistic meetings near where Rustico lived, his aunt took the children to the meetings. She was baptized. Later Rustico and his cousins were baptized, as well.

After Rustico completed high school he wanted to enroll in the theology course at Mountain View College. His family could not pay his fees, but he was not discouraged. He worked one semester to earn money to pay tuition for the next semester. During school he worked three hours before classes, and then after school he worked another three hours before he studied. In this way he finished school in March 1993.

Rustico now works as a lay pastor, helping a pastor who has 24 churches in his district. Rustico oversees 12 of these. His only transportation is a bicycle, and yet he holds three church services each Sabbath. He arrives early at the first church and conducts the divine service, then he rides one half hour to the second church and conducts their worship service. He eats dinner at the church and then pedals to his third church in time for the AY meeting at 3:00. During the week he visits with members.

With this schedule he is able to visit each church once a month. The other weeks local elders lead out in church activities. Rustico meets with his local elders and provides them with sermons and books. He teaches them how to write their own sermons and how to meet the members' needs effectively.

Rustico assists the district pastor in holding evangelistic meetings. As with most young men in his position, his salary is a stipend of \$50 a month--barely enough to meet his needs. But he is doing what he loves best--telling others of Jesus' love and giving hope of eternal life.



Rustico (left) would like to use his talents and education as a missionary if God calls him. Arlene Webb teaches elementary school at Mountain View College in the Philippines.

Witnessing by the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 4:16-21; Acts 1:8; 1 John 4:13-15; Rev. 18:1-5; Dan. 12:3.

MEMORY TEXT: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

KEY THOUGHT: We may be guided by the Holy Spirit in our witnessing endeavors as were Jesus and the early Christians. The former and latter rains provide the power to witness effectively.

WHEN THE SPIRIT SPEAKS, SOULS RESPOND. One day when a pastor was giving a woman a Bible study in her home, a young man smoking a cigarette walked into the room. The woman introduced her son, who reluctantly shook hands with the pastor and left the room. In the next room, listening to the Bible study, the young man became deeply convicted over his spiritual condition.

Weeks later the pastor's phone rang at suppertime. "Pastor," the voice said, "I'm Paul."

"Oh yes, Paul, I met you some weeks ago."

"Pastor, how can I overcome sin?" Then Paul asked, "Pastor, would you come to my apartment and give me Bible studies as you did for my mother?"

"Of course I will," responded the pastor. And the next Friday evening he was at Paul's apartment. As the Holy Spirit continued to speak to Paul, he responded wholeheartedly and was baptized.

JESUS WAS GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (Luke 4:16-22).

What was the basis of Jesus' spiritual power as a witness for His Father? What kind of work was the focus of Jesus' ministry? Acts 10:38; Luke 4:16-21.

As a man, Jesus submitted His ministry to the direction of His Father. He said, "For the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me" (John 5:36, RSV). As the Father directed Jesus' work by the Holy Spirit, so He will direct our work. Even though Jesus was Deity, equal in authority and power with the Father (John 5:18; 8:58), He chose to submit to the direction of the Holy Spirit as human beings must do. In witnessing to others, our best example is Jesus.

From one classic example of Jesus' witnessing method, deduce principles that the Holy Spirit will use to guide us as we submit to His direction. John 4:4-38.

First, Jesus placed Himself where He knew people would come. Without compromising principle, if we wish to reach unbelievers, we must be where they are. In our introductory story, the pastor was in a place where Paul, the young man, could be reached. Paul would probably not have accepted an invitation to the pastor's church.

Second, Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Thus He attempted to break down prejudice and invite confidence. The last thing this Samaritan expected of a Jew was that he would ask a favor of her. To attract others to Christ, we must win their friendship and confidence.

Third, Jesus used water to represent the eternal life He wished to give this woman. He tactfully led her mind from one of her most familiar physical needs to an awareness of her deep spiritual need. We must first approach people on the basis of that which is familiar to them.

Fourth, Jesus brought conviction to the woman's heart. "Go, call your husband, and come here" (John 4:16, RSV). We may not always know the circumstances of people's lives as Jesus did, but gently, with compassion and consummate tact, we may be able to bring them to a sense of spiritual need.

Fifth, Jesus led her to accept Him as the Messiah. What a privilege is ours of introducing aching hearts and empty lives to the Christ who died for their sins!

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE LED BY THE SPIRIT (Acts 1:8).

How did the Holy Spirit qualify the early Christians to witness for Christ? Acts 1:4, 5, 8; 2:4, 11.

Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit as the power to witness for Him. On the Day of Pentecost, spiritual gifts, including the gift of tongues, were given to facilitate witnessing. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16, RSV). He so loved the world that He sent His followers to lead lost souls to His Son. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make Christ known (John 15:26; 16:14). Our best qualification for soul winning is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

When Peter was taken before the Sanhedrin, what witness did the Holy Spirit inspire him to give? Acts 4:5-12.

Our circumstances may be unfavorable; we may be opposed or even persecuted for our faith, but Jesus promised: "When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:19, 20, RSV). This wonderful promise was fulfilled for Peter and the other early Christians who were willing to speak for their Master.

Christ was the center of their message. Peter did not hesitate to remind the Jewish religious leaders that they had crucified Christ. Yet there was still hope for them if only they would believe. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, RSV).

How was Jesus' great prayer for the spiritual unity of His followers (John 17:20-23) answered for the early Christians? Acts 4:31-37.

Jesus' prayer was that the unity of His followers would be a witness to the world of His love and power. It was not unity merely for the sake of peace. It was unity as a testimony to the world that Christ's Spirit can transform lives and replace hatred and conflict with love and cooperation.

WITNESSING NOW BY THE SPIRIT (1 John 4:13-15).

How important is it to confess to others that Jesus is Lord?
Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9, 10.

Jesus and Paul were not suggesting that we earn salvation by witnessing. The point is that willingness to witness is an evidence that the Holy Spirit is reigning in our hearts. The apostle John clarified the issue with delightful spiritual insight: "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:13-15, RSV).

When the Spirit reigns supreme in our lives, our greatest concern will be to make Christ known.

In our present witnessing endeavors, the following Bible principles are vital:

1. We need the former rain (Luke 24:49): "If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. . . . Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plentitude."
—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

2. We are to exemplify and uplift Christ's holiness (Phil. 2:1-11): "Does your character testify for Christ? Can you speak of the refining, ennobling, sanctifying influence of the truth as it is in Jesus? What have *you* seen, what have *you* known, of the power of Christ? This is the kind of witness for which the Lord calls, and for which the churches are suffering."
—*Gospel Workers*, p. 273.

3. Only Christ's message is to be presented (Matt. 28:20): "The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation."
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

4. More and more of the Spirit's power is given to us as we witness (Eph. 5:18): "We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit."
—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 508.

WITNESSING WHEN WE RECEIVE THE LATTER RAIN (Rev. 18:1-5).

Because the latter rain will be a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit than ever before, God's people will have greater power for witnessing than ever before.

Study the following Bible passages in relation to the Ellen G. White comments:

1. Revelation 18:1-5. The latter rain prepares God's people for the final proclamation of the three angels' messages and for the events that follow: the close of probation, the time of trouble, and the coming of Jesus: "While the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the latter rain, or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out."—*Early Writings*, pp. 85, 86.

2. Revelation 18:1. The latter rain will be more abundant than Pentecost: "The outpouring of the Spirit in apostolic days was the former rain, and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

3. Joel 2:28, 29. The latter rain will provide power for fearless proclamation of the message: "Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. . . . The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

4. Mark 16:17, 18. Miracles will be performed: "Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

5. John 4:35; Gal. 6:9. Many will respond, and their lives will be transformed: "Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

REWARDS FOR CHRIST'S FAITHFUL WITNESSES (Dan. 12:3).

What do the following passages teach regarding the rewards for Christ's faithful witnesses?

Ps. 126:6 _____

Dan. 12:3 _____

Matt. 25:31-40 _____

1 Cor. 3:8 _____

The Scriptures abound with assurances for those who, placing their complete trust in Christ, "cast. . . [their] bread upon the waters" (Eccl. 11:1). The promise that "those who turn many to righteousness" will shine "like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3, RSV) is especially precious to soul winners.

Jesus' picture of the last great judgment (Matt. 25:31-40) dramatizes the enormous significance of practical deeds of kindness. Witnessing is not merely the presentation of propositional truth; nor are the divine rewards given only to those who have clearly expounded the Bible message. Those whose lack of verbal skill has predisposed them to demonstrate their love by generous works and kindly deeds will receive special mention and rich rewards.

What visions of reunion and rejoicing does John describe in Revelation 15:2-4; 20:4; 22:4?

The relief and rejoicing of Christ's followers will be in proportion to their struggles. Those who proclaim Christ's final message must gain the victory over "the beast and its image and the number of its name" (Rev. 15:2, RSV). They draw nearer to the Lord, gain the victory over sin, and proclaim the message to the world in the face of bitter opposition. Because they receive the latter rain, they are spiritually qualified for the task and shielded from the almost overmastering temptations of the evil one. Their greatest joy will be to meet their Saviour, to see His face, to hear His voice speaking to them personally, and to share His spotless character for eternity.

Are you prepared for the challenges that precede these matchless rewards?

FURTHER STUDY: As a reminder of the eternal home our Lord is preparing for each of His faithful witnesses, read Revelation 21, 22. Read "Go Teach All Nations" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 818-828.

"God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. . . . The city of God will open its golden gates to receive him who learned while on earth to lean on God for guidance and wisdom, for comfort and hope, amid loss and affliction. The songs of the angels will welcome him there, and for him the tree of life shall yield its fruit. 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' Isaiah 54:10."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 99, 100.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If you were asked how you are employing your distinctive spiritual gifts to witness for Christ, how would you answer?
2. Instead of leaving all the soul-winning work to your pastor, how can your church members become involved? What plans could you present to involve the whole church in labor for the Lord?
3. Some members of the church seem more concerned about their own physical, emotional, and spiritual fulfillment than about the needs and salvation of those about them. What tactful measures can you take to encourage a different attitude?
4. How can the church's Community Services program and the Ingathering program be tied in more directly with the soul-winning program?

SUMMARY: As Jesus and the early Christians submitted to the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit in their witnessing endeavors, so may we. As we daily receive a renewal of the former-rain infilling of the Holy Spirit, we are preparing for the latter rain and for our final effort to make Christ known to the world. Witnesses for Christ cherish the ultimate reward of being with Him and with the redeemed for eternity.



Safe in a Bird's House

Liya Yunak

In the countries of the former Soviet Union the church of God survived through faith in God and ingenuity. Believers relied on God's guidance and protection as we sought to further God's cause in an atheistic society. We understood very distinctively the admonition of Jesus to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). God gave wisdom to church ministers during the trying times we faced.

As a church pastor, my husband often had to keep the church's money. The government forbade churches to collect tithes or obtain other financial support, so churches had to keep their offerings a secret. We could not put money into a bank, so we had to keep large sums of money at home.

We knew that at any time the police or the KGB could bang on our door and search our home. They could confiscate our property and arrest us if they suspected us of breaking the law by holding money given by others for the church's support. We had to seek convenient and safe places to hide the church's money.

We hid small sums of money in flower pots. We could retrieve the money simply by transplanting the flower. Large sums were often kept by trusted church members. One pastor hid the church moneys in beehives. My husband chose a birdhouse for his "treasury." Near our house grew a tall pear tree. He placed a birdhouse high in the tree. In the spring, before the birds returned to nest, our elder son climbed the tree and cleaned the nesting box. Then, after making sure that our neighbors were not watching, my husband handed our son a packet of large bills wrapped in plastic. "Put this on the bottom to warm the box and put some dry grass on it," he instructed our son.

Eventually birds came, laid their eggs, and hatched their brood in the nest. When they flew away in the autumn we could "clean the nesting box," take inventory of the money, remove part of it or add some more. Nobody outside our family and God, of course, had the slightest idea of that "bank" in the bird's house.

We have always enjoyed flowers on our window sills. But God gave us wisdom to use the flowers--and the birds of the heavens--to protect His people's tithes and offerings. Every *kopeck* (penny), whether it was the small sum given by a widow or a large sum given by someone who had more, was carefully guarded and used to further God's cause during hard times.

Liya Yunak is a secretary in the Euro-Asian Division office in Moscow, Russia.

For Current Newsbreak, Call 1-800-648-5824.

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Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1995

The fourth quarter Sabbath School lessons, entitled "Incarnation of Grace," focus on the earthly life and ministry of Jesus.

Lesson 1: The Time for Grace

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 3:9-18; 5:15-21; Hebrews 4:14-16; John 1:14-17.

MEMORY TEXT: Ephesians 2:8, 9, NIV.

KEY THOUGHT: We can define the term *grace* as God's infinite love for lost humanity and all that His love leads Him to do for our salvation.

OUTLINE:

- What Is Grace? (2 Cor. 8:9).
- Why We Need Grace (Rom. 3:9-18).
- Jesus—God's Revelation of Grace (John 1:14-18).
- The Results of Grace (Eph. 2:4-7).
- Our Response to Grace (Eph. 2:8-10).

Lesson 2: A Messiah Is Promised (Part 1).

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Peter 1:10-12; Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1-5; 40:3-5; 42:1-4.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Peter 1:10, NIV.

KEY THOUGHT: When the time had come for the Messiah to arrive, Isaiah's prophecies confirmed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the sinner's hope.

OUTLINE:

- Prophecies Reveal Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12).
- The Promised Child (Isa. 9:2-7).
- A Work of Preparation (Isa. 40:3-5).
- Characteristics of the Messiah (Isa. 11:1-5).
- The Mission of the Messiah (Isa. 42:1).

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- **Are they what they claim or are they imposters?**
- **What is the origin and history of this organization?**

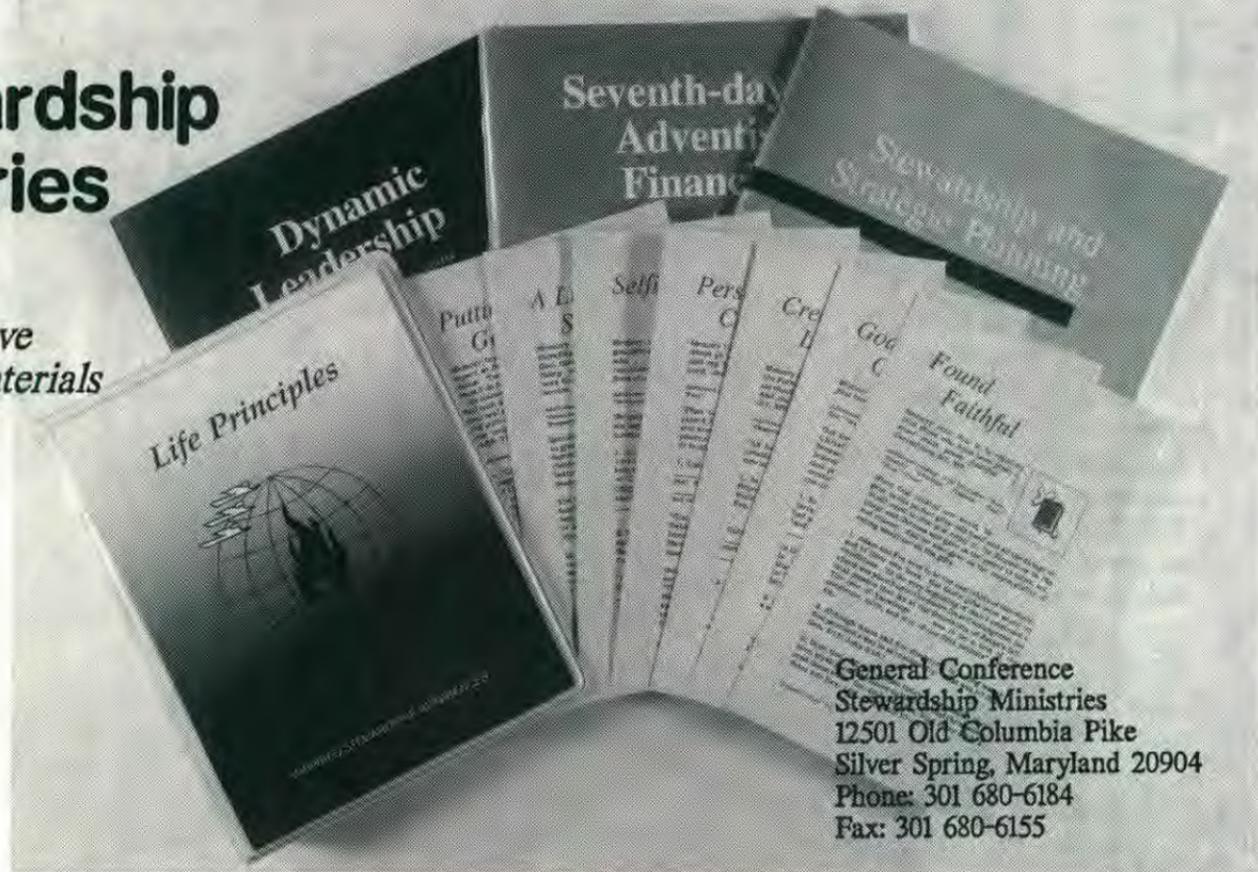
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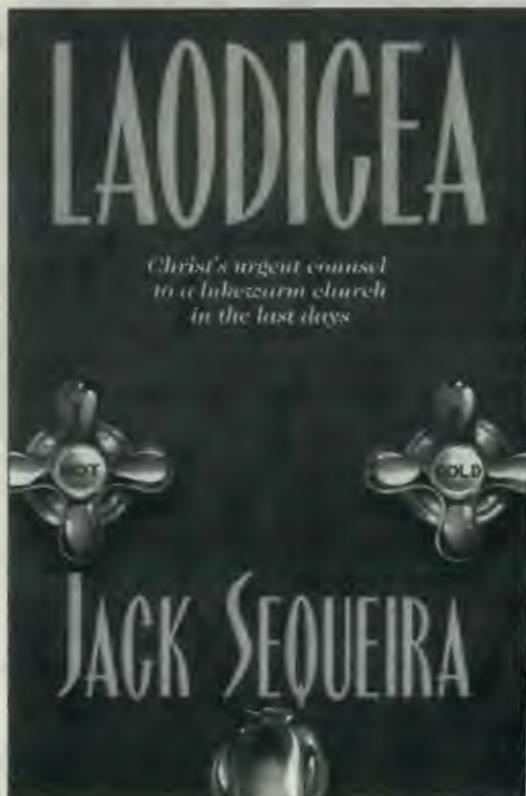
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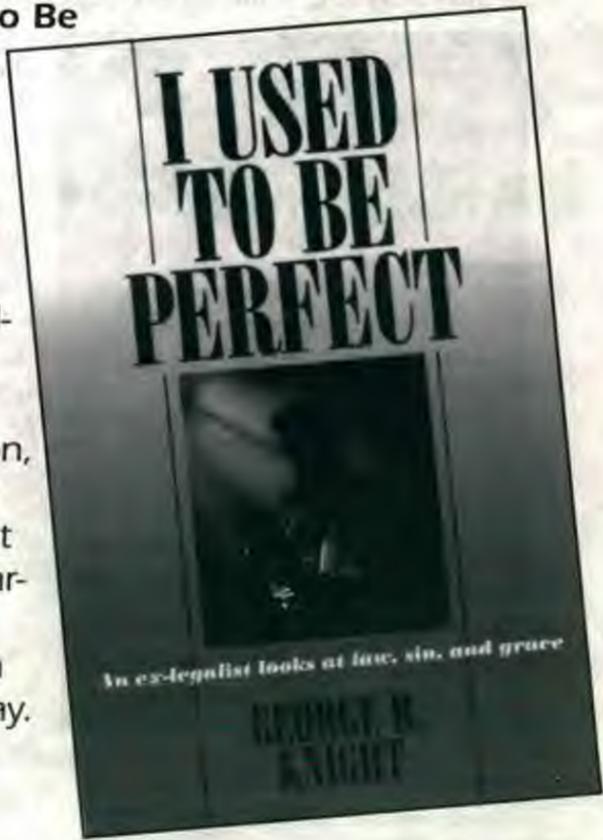
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Between the Lamb and the Lion

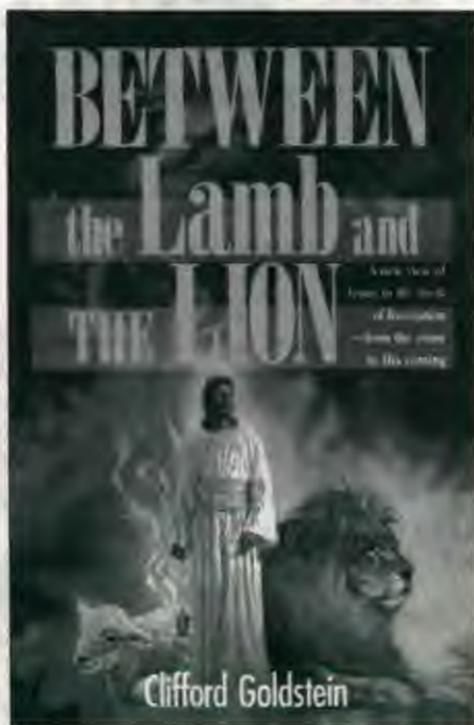
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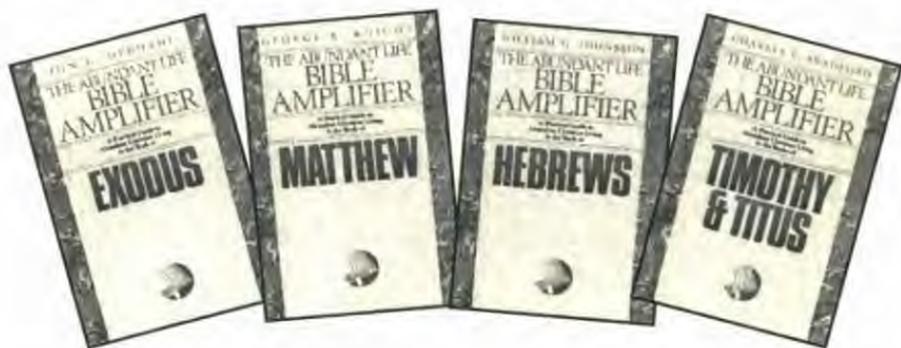
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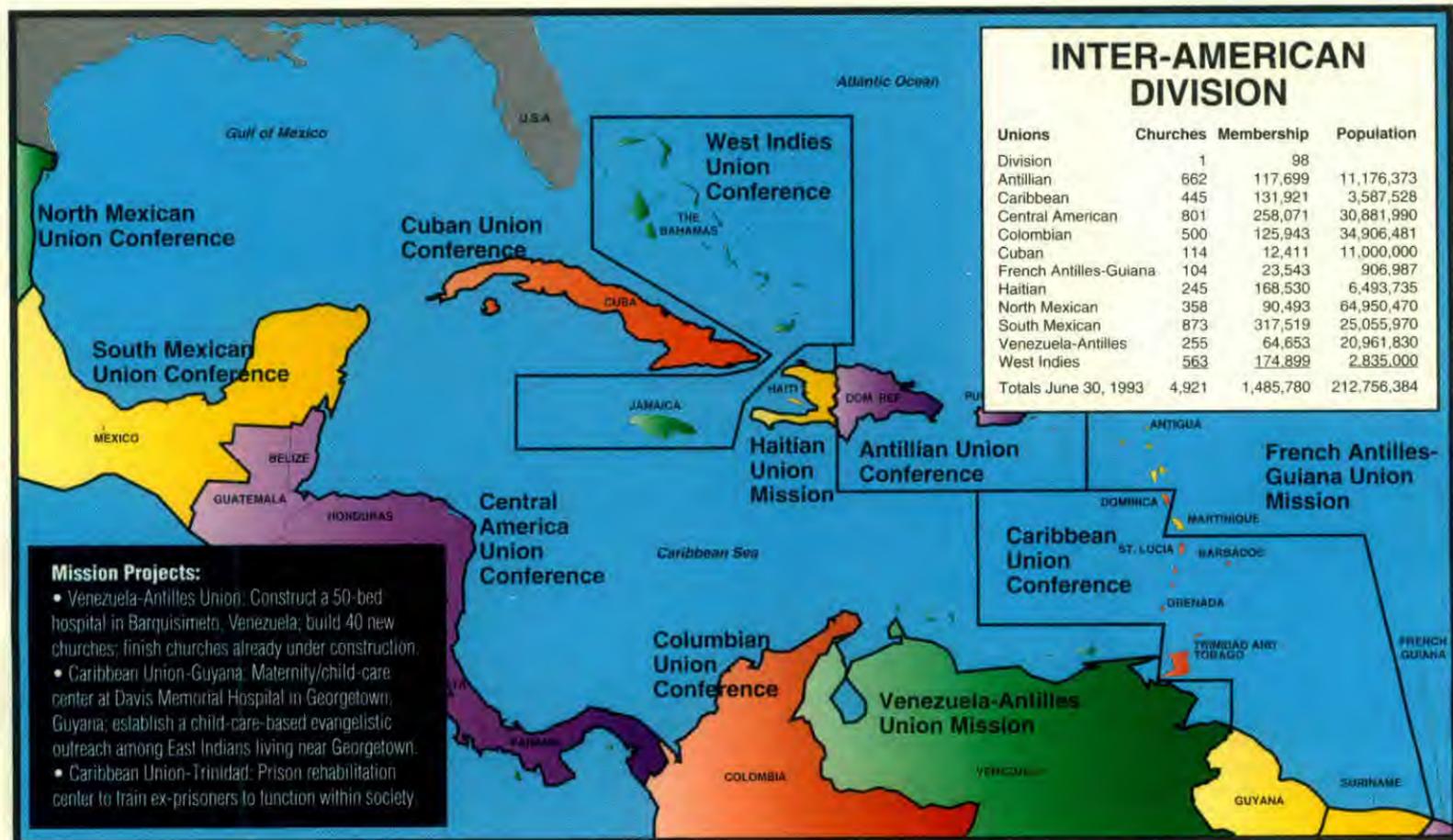
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Central American	801	258,071	30,881,990
Colombian	500	125,943	34,906,481
Cuban	114	12,411	11,000,000
French Antilles-Guiana	104	23,543	906,987
Haitian	245	168,530	6,493,735
North Mexican	358	90,493	64,950,470
South Mexican	873	317,519	25,055,970
Venezuela-Antilles	255	64,653	20,961,830
West Indies	563	174,899	2,835,000
Totals June 30, 1993	4,921	1,485,780	212,756,384

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