

The Restorer



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Genesis 1, Jer. 17:9, John 15:13, Rom. 1:21, 5:10-19, 1 Cor. 13:4-7, Titus 1:15, 2 Pet. 1:2-8.*

Memory Text: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (*Philippians 1:6*).

One of the great hopes of all Christians is the hope of eternal life. After all, without that—what? We live, we die, we rot in the ground forever alongside the animals? No, that’s not to be our end. Instead, not only do we have the hope of eternal life—it’s not a continued life here in this world as it now is. Please! Our short existence world is hard enough; *imagine that going on forever!*

Instead, we’re given the wonderful promise: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (*2 Pet. 3:13*). Eternal life isn’t eternal life on this sinful earth but on a new one where there will dwell not sin, not death, not sinners—but “righteousness.”

From the beginning, God has been working toward that goal, that goal of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. And this is where the plan of salvation becomes crucial, for the plan of salvation is how God is working to get us into that new earth. That’s why salvation includes the process of restoration. God is getting us ready for a new heaven and a new earth and the righteousness that will dwell there.

This week we continue our look at what the Holy Spirit is doing in order to prepare us for our new home.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 10.*

Created in God’s Image *(Genesis 1)*

Even the simplest reading of the Genesis Creation account reveals that our existence is no accident. We are not here because of blind, purposeless forces that, given enough time, just happened to coalesce into a people-filled planet. Instead, we are here because God purposely put us here. Verse after verse in Genesis 1 explicitly depicts God as the Agent of Creation. In other words, there was a distinct plan for our existence. Nothing was left to chance. Contrast this view to evolutionary theory, which claims we are here *only* by chance; that there was no plan, no purpose, no intention for us. We are a cosmic accident, nothing more. It’s hard to imagine any view more contradictory to biblical origins than evolution. No wonder Satan works so hard to promote it.

Genesis 1:26, 27 says that God created man and woman in His own image. What does that mean, being created in the image of God? How does 1 John 4:8 help us answer this question?

Whatever being in the image of God means, it must also include the capacity to love. As beings made in the image of a God who Himself “is love,” what else could it be? This ability to love sets us apart distinctly from the rest of what was created in Genesis 1. The moon, the grass, the seas, even the animals—none of which was made in the image of God—don’t have the capacity to love as humans do. Certainly the ability to love, as we have it, has made us different from everything else created in Genesis.

From your own personal experiences, along with what the Bible teaches (see *John 15:13, 1 Cor. 13:4-7, 1 John 4:10*), what is your best understanding of what love is? What does your answer tell you about what Adam and Eve must have been like after first being created? What does your answer tell you about what life on this earth was intended to be like? Be prepared to share your answer in class.

Love and the Fall

Read Genesis 3:1-6. What did Adam and Eve have to possess in order to be able to fall?

Yesterday, we saw we were created in the image of God, and whatever else that must mean, it must, at least, mean we were given the capacity to love. Yet, love, in order to be love, has to be free; that is, God can't force His creatures to love Him, or one another for that matter. Love cannot be coerced. Because we were given the ability to love, we also were given free choice. The Fall is a powerful example of what happens when beings with free choice make the wrong choices.

And we, too, millennia after Eden, have free choice. Yet, our situation is much worse than Adam and Eve's before the Fall. They were perfect beings, living in the full light of God's glory; their natures were not corrupted or sinful. In contrast, we are fallen beings with corrupted, sinful natures steeped in iniquity. It's one thing having free choice while perfect; it's another having that same free choice while corrupted. What's scarier: a kind, gentle, loving person who carries a gun or a nasty, spiteful, and hateful one who wields the same weapon?

What kind of picture do the following texts portray about unregenerate human nature? *Jer. 17:9, Rom. 1:21, 5:12, Eph. 2:3, Titus 1:15.*

The Bible is very clear about the state of fallen human nature. It's bad, very bad, and left unchecked it would lead to death and destruction for the entire human race. All one has to do is look around at the world today, and we can see, everywhere, the results of what our fallen nature has wrought: war, terrorism, addiction, exploitation, prostitution, crime, and on and on. It's only because of the grace of God we haven't destroyed ourselves. No doubt, if given enough time, we would accomplish just that.

What things do you see around you every day that testify to the corruption of human nature? What does your answer tell you about just how desperate our situation would be if left unsolved?

Second Probation

Sunday and Monday we looked at first the creation of humanity and then at the Fall. Our situation, as fallen creatures, was bleak. The actions of Adam and Eve after the Fall perfectly reflected the state of humanity: fearful, alienated from God and each other, guilty, and ashamed. With their children, murder was added to the roster of human wickedness (*Gen. 4:8*), and before long their hearts were “only evil continually” (*Gen. 6:5*).

Of course, we know that God didn’t leave humanity to suffer the full and final results of sin. The whole plan of salvation was initiated by the Lord in order to rescue us from the utter ruin that would otherwise have been ours. Jesus came and went over the same ground as Adam, only where Adam failed Jesus succeeded—and because of what Jesus accomplished, the whole world was given another chance. Through faith in Jesus, anyone, anywhere, can have the promise of eternal life, the promise of having restored everything that was lost through sin.

Look at the following text (*Rom. 5:10-19*). **What is the essential message it is giving to us? Notice the stark contrasts presented here. What brought death, and what brings life?**

Jesus came, and through all He accomplished with His sinless life and then atoning death, the human race has been given another chance. In this sense, the human race, as a whole, has been restored to favor with God. This doesn’t mean the whole race is automatically saved or justified; it means, instead, everyone has been given another chance. The doom that should have been ours through Adam has been averted because of Jesus.

“The word of God declares that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price. It is at an immense cost that we have been placed upon vantage ground, where we can find liberty from the bondage of sin wrought by the fall in Eden. Adam’s sin plunged the race into hopeless misery; but by the sacrifice of the Son of God, a second probation was granted to man. In the plan of redemption a way of escape is provided for all who will avail themselves of it.”—Ellen G. White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 15.

Think about what it means to have a “second probation.” Were you ever given a second chance at something? What did you learn from that experience that can help you better appreciate what you now have been given through the Cross?

The Restoration: Part 1

Yesterday, we saw that despite our desperate situation, God did not leave us without hope. On the contrary, we have been given great hope through Jesus Christ, who has paved the way for each of us to return to what we would have been before the Fall.

And the process begins now. The gospel isn't just salvation; it isn't just a change in our legal status before God. The gospel is also restoration. We were originally made in the image of God; the plan of salvation is the process to bring us back to that state. This isn't just something that will happen at the Second Coming: It's a process that begins now. The Holy Spirit is working in us to restore in us what has been lost through sin.

Read 2 Peter 1:2-8. How do these verses, particularly the part where Peter talks about being “partakers of the divine nature,” help us understand the work of restoration that is going on in us right now? How do these verses relate to Genesis 1:26, 27?

God works to change fallen beings into His image by transforming their wills, minds, and desires. In short, the Holy Spirit works on our characters. Partaking of the divine nature, we are being transformed. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). And that image, of course, is the image of God, and this has been revealed to us in no better way than through Jesus, who was “the express image” (Heb. 1:3) of God's person. Yet, because Jesus isn't here in the flesh, the Holy Spirit is here as His Representative, revealing to us the truths that will change and transform our lives. This is a process of restoration that will not be completed until there's a new heaven and a new earth. Until then, God is working on us now, getting us ready for a new existence that has been made available to us through Jesus.

Imagine what your life would be like if you more and more reflected the character of Jesus. What immediate changes would take place, particularly in your relationship with others, were you to start reflecting that character?

The Restoration: Part 2

Write the essential message of each text, and as you write out your answer, ask yourself: How well am I experiencing the promises given in each text?

Rom. 5:1

2 Cor. 5:17

Eph. 4:24

Phil. 2:12, 13

1 Pet. 5:10

The Christian life is a road toward *perfection* (*Rom. 12:2, James 1:4*), a word that in the New Testament comes with the idea of “completion,” “fully grown,” or “mature.” We are to be perfect in our finite and fallen sphere as God is in His infinite and absolute sphere (*Matt. 5:48*).

Apart from Christ, of course, we cannot attain any kind of “perfection.” Instead, it is Christ who “became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (*1 Cor. 1:30, NASB*). In Christ, these qualities constitute our “perfection” before God. He completed, once and for all, our sanctification and redemption. We are “complete in Him” even now (*Col. 2:10*). It is now the work of the Holy Spirit to take these “completed” products and make manifest in our lives the reality of what Christ has done for us. Our growth, our character development, our restoration toward the image of God become the living expression of what it means to “be filled with all the fullness of God” (*Eph. 3:19*). In Christ, the Holy Spirit is making real *in us* the reality of what Christ has done for us. No one can be a Christian without both these aspects of salvation foundational to their new lives in Christ.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44, 45; *Steps to Christ*, “Consecration,” pp. 47, 48; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 21–23; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, “The Sower Went Forth to Sow,” pp. 33–69; “Two Worshipers,” pp. 161–163; Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1097, 1098.

“In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

“Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1101.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, go over your answers to Sunday’s final question. Before you do, have each person write on a card his or her own definition of love and have each person read it before the discussion begins.
- ❷ Read aloud in class the second Ellen G. White quote listed above. How does that idea help us understand the close relationship between faith and works in the life of a Christian?
- ❸ As a class, talk about the idea of a “second probation,” a second chance. Is there anyone you know who needs another chance? If so, why not, as a class, make a determined effort to find that person and let him or her know that he or she has another chance, not only with each of you but, more important, with God?

The Shining Church, Part 1

Mar Dela Fuente

Datu (chief) Lagunday of Migtulod village in the mountains of southern Philippines was the only person in his village who wanted the student missionaries from Mountain View College to come and teach the children. The villagers were sure the new school was a trap to steal the tribe's land. Even the chief's wife resisted the coming of these "outsiders." But the chief prevailed, and the first team of student missionary teachers arrived in 1994.

"If you will not send your children to the village school I will not force you," Chief Lagunday told the people. "But as long as I am chief I will support this school. I believe that some day this village will be a shining light to other villages."

Unfortunately Chief Lagunday died, and the villagers closed the school. But the new chief soon realized that the village needed the school and its selfless young teachers to educate the children. He journeyed to Mountain View College and begged the student missionaries to come back and reopen the school.

Soon the village echoed with children's voices singing praises to God early in the morning. As the people learned the importance of cleanliness, they cleaned themselves and their squalid village. Pigs were no longer permitted to run through the village. The village became the cleanest community on the mountainside; it became a shining light to the villages around it. The children learned quickly, and soon they could compete with students from other villages in the skills they had learned. The parents learned better farming techniques and soon had enough produce to sell in the lowland marketplaces.

The villagers built a church on the hill overlooking their village. They planted lovely flowers along the steep dirt path up the hillside. The church's gas lamp drew villagers up the hillside for evening worships, and on Sabbaths the church was filled with believers who brought their food and stayed all day on the hillside.

Early one morning the wife of the new village chief woke her husband and children to tell them of a bright star shining from the church on the hill. "Truly our church *is* shining to other villages," the chief said.

(Continued next week)

When this was written Mar Dela Fuente was a student missionary teacher at the Adventist mission school in Migtulod Village in southern Philippines.