

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.

Key Text: *Romans 5:10-21*

Teachers Aims:

1. To examine the importance of the power of choice.
2. To discuss the goal of the Holy Spirit's restorative work of sanctification.

Lesson Outline:

I. God Is Love and He Created Us Capable of not Only Experiencing but Also Showing His Love (*1 John 4:7-11*).

- A. True love is a choice—a choice freely made.
- B. Because of the Fall, our power of choice was removed; because of Jesus' death on the cross, it is restored in full.

II. Accepting Salvation Opens Us up to the Restoring Work of the Holy Spirit (*Phil. 2:12, 13*).

- A. When we choose life, the Holy Spirit begins to prepare us for life in a sinless environment.
- B. We participate by submitting to this work of transformation (*Rom. 12:2*).

Summary: The bottom line of life is choice. Without the sacrifice of Jesus, our eternal choice would have already been made. Jesus died to give us the ability to choose eternal life in perfection versus a short, pain-filled life ending in eternal death. Though the choice seems obvious to us, many see only the pain of submitting to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must show them the joy of living and growing in a vibrant relationship with God. The reality of eternity and all the wonders that it holds begins now as we experience the love of God on a daily basis.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

“The very essence of the gospel is restoration” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 824), and the Holy Spirit affects our restoration to God's image by recreating us “in righteousness and true holiness” (*Eph. 4:24*), and removing the last vestiges of sin from our lives.

I. Created in God's Image

Humanity came forth from the hand of the Creator a masterpiece of perfection, glowing with the image of God, innately pure, and capable of unlimited spiritual and intellectual development through an unbroken relationship with the Creator. This relationship was conditional on a worshipful, enlightened subordination to the will and law of God, from whom flows all life, love, wisdom and knowledge. Read Genesis 1:26-31, all of Genesis 2, and Ecclesiastes 7:29.

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?

II. Love and the Fall

Adam and Eve's fall produced a radical change in human nature. Now in possession of a sinful nature by their unwise choice, they were impotent to pass on to their progeny anything but that fallen nature, which we have all inherited without our choice (*see Rom. 5:12-19*). A subtle but profound perversion of all our faculties—particularly our moral and intellectual sensibilities—is the dire and deadly consequence of sin, of which the result is death. But God was not content to let the matter rest there. Just as we did not ask to be born into a crooked and perverse race of beings, nor did we ask God to choose the course that He took—to shoulder the burden of resolving the plight that sin has imposed on the human race. Let us praise Him for His gracious and self-sacrificing intervention, rather than intractably sulk over our fallen state, or revel in rebellion. (*See Rom. 10:10-18, 16:25-27.*)

III. Second Probation

It was impossible for God to abandon the human race to its grim and hopeless fate brought on by sin. Impossible, not because He is under anyone's authority—for He is supremely sovereign in the universe—but because His infinite love for us constrained Him to do all that is consistent with His righteousness. God saved us from sin, while at the same time annihilating sin and its effects in one comprehensive plan of concerted action.

Romans 5 rises as a spiritual observatory for surveying the limitless expanse and constellated beauty of the plan of redemption and its effects. Through Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross, God envisaged nothing less than offering His righteousness to us through the abundance of His grace, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (*See Rom. 5:17-21.*) As beneficiaries of Christ and His righteousness, all repentant sinners are now empowered to live in conformity to God's will, not through outward force, but through the motivating power of God's love working from the inmost depths of our transformed being.

IV. The Restoration

“But those who are truly sanctified have a sense of their own weakness. Feeling their need, they will go for light and grace and strength to Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells, and who alone can supply their wants. Conscious of their own imperfections, they seek to become more like Christ, and to live in accordance with the principles of His holy law. This continual sense of inefficiency will lead to such entire dependence upon God that His Spirit will be exemplified in them. The treasures of heaven will be opened to supply the wants of every hungering, thirsting soul. All of this character have the assurance of one day beholding the glory of that kingdom which as yet the imagination can only faintly grasp.

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?

“Those who have felt the sanctifying and transforming power of God must not fall into the dangerous error of thinking that they are sinless, that they have reached the highest state of perfection, and are beyond the reach of temptation. The standard the Christian is to keep before him is the purity and loveliness of Christ’s character. Day by day he may be putting on new beauties, and reflecting to the world more and still more of the divine image.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 66.

V. The Restoration (Continued)

Growing from our standpoint of perfect acceptance with God through Christ (*see Eph. 1:6*), born-again persons are motivated by God’s love and truth to constantly “grow in grace, and in the

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Genesis 1:26, 17:1, Deuteronomy 13:4, Joshua 24:15, Romans 9:22, Hebrews 2:3*

- 1 The book of Genesis informs us that the first humans were created in God’s image. Does that still apply to us? What aspects of our being suggest that the image of God is still present in us? How has that image been distorted?
- 2 Freedom of choice is one of the defining characteristics of the human condition, but it is limited, or influenced, by our present circumstances. How has the presence of sin made it more difficult for us to choose God’s way? Do circumstances absolve us from responsibility? Why, or why not?
- 3 A look at the world in its present state reveals death, decay, and corruption of all kinds. Many scientific theories are based on the assumption that these things existed since the beginning of time. How can we know that the way things are is not the way they were meant to be? What evidence is there in life and nature that there is something higher?
- 4 The human race was given a second chance by the death and resurrection of Christ. Why, then, will some people still not be saved? Do some people make a conscious decision not to be saved? If so, can their decision be an informed decision?
- 5 If Christians are to attain perfection, how are we to understand perfection? Are we using the word *perfection* in the conventional sense of being without flaws or limitations? What does the process of becoming perfect mean in the Christian life? As Christians, how are we in some sense already perfect?

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?

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 *Pet.* 3:18). At no stage of our growth in grace and godliness does the process become a “do-it-yourself” operation. It always remains true that without Christ we “can do nothing” (*John* 15:5). And it always remains true that we can do all divinely ordered things “through Christ who strengthens [us]” (*Phil.* 4:13). It is God working in us to will and to do His good pleasure, empowering us to cooperate intelligently with His will, if we continue to abide in Him. (*See Eph.* 3:16-21; *Phil.* 2:12, 13; *Col.* 1:10, 11.)

“Let the glorious conceptions of God possess your mind. Let your life be knit by hidden links to the life of Jesus. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness is willing to shine in your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will take the things of God and show them unto you, conveying them as a living power

Witnessing

In the hands of a gifted plastic surgeon, miracles take place. A child born with a harelip is given a winning smile. A young man, burned in a terrible automobile crash, ventures back out in public and cherishes the hope that someday he’ll have a chance at a normal life. A middle-aged woman fighting a disfiguring disease is once again made whole with reconstructive surgery.

Second chances. Providing new opportunities. Creating loveliness out of ugliness, deformity, scarring. Turning devastation into restoration. Is it important in this life? You bet. Is creating a better life here on earth what matters most? By God’s grace, no!

Our heavenly Father, the Master Restorer, has promised that someday His children will have the opportunity to live on an earth made new. God’s children will see, for the very first time, what Adam and Eve lost when they exchanged perfection for defection. Sin, with all its twisted and torturous side-effects, will be eradicated, never again to harm or to destroy God’s creations.

Not only will the earth be transformed but, most importantly, so will the children of God. The spiritual, physical, and emotional scars left by sin will be no more. The Master Surgeon will have removed them from His children for eternity.

There will be two sets of scars that will never disappear. These scars belong to the Master Physician, Jesus Christ. Someday soon, God’s children will be able to gently trace the nail holes in the hands and feet of Jesus—an eternal reminder of the price Jesus paid to purchase back each of His children.

Every human being needs the restoring power of the Holy Spirit. What are you going to do this week to make that possible?

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 fulness 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.

into the obedient heart. Christ will lead you to the threshold of the Infinite. You may behold the glory beyond the veil, and reveal to men the sufficiency of Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 149.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Many homes have a picture wall—pictures of parents at their wedding, baby pictures, and current family pictures form a visual history of the occupants. Who do you look like? Did any of your children look like you did at the same age? Plan to share at least one dated family picture in class. See if your class members can recognize you. Read Genesis 1 together as a class. Consider this big, cosmic picture of humanity’s history. What does it really mean to be created in the image of God?

Thought Questions:

1 It is so easy to see the faults in others, but we generally are far less objective with ourselves. Read Jeremiah 17:9 and Titus 1:15. In class, discuss why we wear blinders when it comes to our own flaws. How is this a consequence of sin and how does it separate us from God? In what ways does the Holy Spirit seek to heal us, even though we have contracted the chronic disease of sin? Why is it so difficult for us to grant the same compassion to others?

2 Recently, Michelangelo’s statue of David was restored. In the process of cleaning the surface of the marble, it was discovered that the ankles of the statue were beginning to crumble under its weight. How often do you take one step forward toward God only to find that you also took three steps on a side journey away from Him? When you “make every effort” (*2 Pet. 1:5, NIV*) to stay on the right path, who comes alongside you to help? Discuss the gift of the Holy Spirit and how it enhances our own attempts to be like Jesus. How can we keep from relying too heavily on our own plans and agendas for becoming right with God?

Application Question:

What were your family’s rules when someone was out of line? Did your parents say, “We’ll count to three,” mandating that the wrongful behavior must stop before the “three” was pronounced? How did this represent a second chance to conform to family guidelines? Humanity, and each of us personally, has chosen to rebel against God. Read Romans 1:21 and 5:10-19 in as many versions as you have available. What are these passages saying to you personally? Write a letter to God accepting salvation. Ask Him to make “the gift of righteousness reign” (*Rom. 5:17, NIV*) in your life.

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:

- 1 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.
- 2 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?
- 3 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?