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Introduction

Revival¹ and Reformation²

In every generation, God's Spirit works to bring revival to the hearts of His people. But revival is an experience that continues daily. All of us should imagine ourselves in an old hymn that says: "*Prone [likely] to wander, Lord, I feel it, / Prone to leave the God I love*" (from "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson). Deep inside, we know these words are true.

We know these words are true because our hearts do like to wander sometimes. Our thoughts turn so easily from the heavenly to the earthly. Too often we seem to be slaves to our stubborn habits. At times our own attitudes and actions puzzle us.

That is because we are sinful and fallen (Jeremiah 17:9). For example, we like to turn from God's way to our own (Isaiah 53:6). With the apostle (teacher and leader) Paul, we cry out, "O wretched man that I am" (Romans 7:24). And with David we beg, "Revive [restore; renew] me, O LORD, according to Your loving-kindness" (Psalm 119:159, NKJV).

Revival is all about a God of lovingkindness trying to make His relationship with us be deeper. God always takes the first step in improving our spiritual lives. His Spirit causes us to want to improve ourselves. His Spirit makes us aware of our need. His Spirit shows Jesus' goodness and grace.³

Throughout history, God's Spirit has brought revivals⁴ with great power. When Israel wandered from God's plan and purposes, God used the young King Josiah to lead the nation back to Him. And a powerful revival followed. At the dedication of the temple, God said to Solomon: " 'But they [God's people] make themselves low in my sight. They pray and look to me. And they turn from their evil ways. Then I will listen to them from heaven. I will forgive their sin. And I will heal their land. After all, they are my people' " (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV). In other words, God wanted Israel to obey Him fully. He wanted His people to experience the power of His spirit. And He wanted to show the light of His love to the entire world.

When God's people accepted His call for revival, He worked powerfully for them. This was true for the New Testament Christian church, the Reformation (during the 1500s), and the Advent Movement (the 1800s). It will also be true for God's end-time people. His Holy Spirit will be poured out in its fullness. And the earth will shine with His glory (power and praise) (Revelation 18:1).

1. revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one's spiritual life.

2. reformation—making changes in one's lifestyle in order to live a better Christian life.

3. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

4. revivals—movements designed to awaken people's interest in God and to improve their spiritual lives.

This quarter we will study revival and reformation. Together we will study such questions as, What are the conditions that God has given for the outpouring of His Spirit? Is God waiting for some magical moment to pour out His Spirit on His last-day church? What does it mean to live a Spirit-filled life? Is there anything we can do to cooperate with God in order to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit now? Where do revival and reformation begin?

Ellen G. White described the importance of revival in these words: “A revival of the true godly spirit among us is the greatest and most important of all our needs.”—Adapted from *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 121. Heaven puts great importance on revival. What could be more important? This quarter we will study such topics as prayer and revival, the Word (the Bible) and revival, witnessing and revival, a finished work and revival, and other subjects about revival. So let us pray that God will powerfully speak to our hearts and bring us closer to Him.

Why not open your heart to the moving of His Spirit right now? Why not ask Him to do something extra special in your life today? He will answer your prayers. And heavenly blessings will flow to you in amazing ways.

Mark Finley was born in Connecticut. He is a world-famous evangelist.⁵ He also was a vice president at the General Conference from 2005–2010. After he retired from full-time work, Pastor Finley became an assistant to the president of the General Conference to work part time on the Revival and Reformation project. Pastor Finley and his wife, Ernestine, have three children and two grandchildren.

5. evangelist—traveling preacher of the gospel.