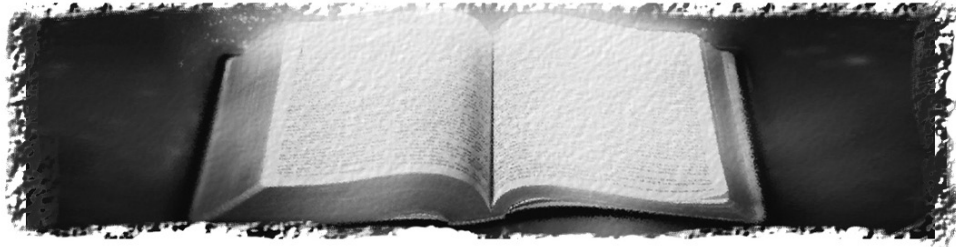


Being Wise: The Safeguard (Protection) of Revival¹



SABBATH—AUGUST 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 17:3; 1 John 2:3–6; Matthew 23:27, 28; 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7.

MEMORY VERSE: “See how I love your rules! LORD, keep me alive, because you love me. All your words are true. All your laws are right. They last forever” (Psalm 119:159, 160, NIV).

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG PASTOR, I STUDIED WITH A FAMILY IN THE FARMING COUNTRY OF TENNESSEE. One day a large man walked into the room smoking a big cigar. He then declared that the Lord had healed him from lung cancer!

I have thought about this experience often. This man sincerely believed that the Holy Spirit had healed him by a miracle. But did his belief that he was healed make it true? Are signs and wonders always proof of the Holy Spirit's working? What part might signs and wonders have in a false revival?

When we think about revival, we need to ask, *Is it possible that the devil can create a false religious excitement and make the people think that a true revival has happened?*

This week we will study the spiritual examples of true revival. And we will compare² them with the clear signs of false ones. Knowing the difference between the two will help to save us from being fooled by Satan.

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

2. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 18

**GOD'S WILL AND HIS WORD
(Psalm 119:25)**

A truly spiritual life depends on knowing God and doing His will (John 17:3; Hebrews 10:7). Any false “revival” that depends on experience and not on obeying God’s Word (the Bible) does not follow God completely. The Holy Spirit will never lead us where God’s Word does not. The Holy Spirit leads us into the Word (2 Timothy 3:15, 16). The Word of God is the foundation (basis; beginning) and heart of all true revival.

What does Psalm 119:25, 28, 49, 50, 67, 81, 105, 116, 130, 154 tell us about revival and God’s Word? List all the spiritual things that God’s Word develops in our lives. What do these promises mean in our real experience with the Lord?

Jesus gave a sermon about the Bread of Life. He explained all the important principles (important rules) of all revival. And He explained the foundation of all spiritual life. He said, “The Holy Spirit gives life. The body means nothing at all. The words I have spoken to you are from the Spirit. They give life” (John 6:63, NIV). What Jesus said is very important. All spiritual revival begins with the Holy Spirit. He speaks through God’s Word to give a deep spiritual life to those who accept it by faith. Revival takes place when the Holy Spirit puts Jesus’ words in our minds. This is why the Savior said, “ ‘Man doesn’t [does

not] live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God” ’ ” (Matthew 4:4, NIV).

“In many of the revivals during the last half century, evil influences have been at work. These same evil influences will be seen in future ‘revival’ meetings. These are false revivals. There is an emotional excitement in them. They mix both the true and the false together. These revivals are designed to deceive [trick] people. But no one needs to be deceived. In the light of God’s Word, it is not difficult [hard] to see the evil behind these movements. Men fail to read and obey the truth of the Bible. They turn away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and separation from the world. When we see this happening, we may be sure that God’s blessing is not given.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War between Christ and Satan]*, page 464.

True revival is when we discover God’s will as shown in God’s Word. Jesus lived a life filled with the Holy Spirit. From His birth to His death, He was led and empowered³ by the Holy Spirit.

True Revival



The Word of God is the foundation of true revival.

3. empowered—given power.

MONDAY—AUGUST 19

**GOD’S LOVE AND HIS LAW
(1 John 2:3–6)**

Revival is all about knowing Jesus. It reawakens the spiritual side of the soul. Revival is a very important and personal experience with the Savior. Knowing Jesus—really knowing Him as a Friend—is the most important part of all revival. From his deep, personal experience with Jesus, the apostle (leader and teacher) Paul shared that he was praying for the Ephesians to “know his [Jesus’] love, even though it can’t [cannot] be known completely. Then you will be filled with everything God has for you” (Ephesians 3:19, NIV).

This is different from the story of the end-time virgins. Five of the virgins seem to be godly and religious on the outside but do not have a very close experience with Jesus. In response to the great need of the five virgins, Jesus, the Bridegroom, says, “ ‘What I’m [I am] about to tell you is true. I don’t [do not] know you’ ” (Matthew 25:12, NIV).

Knowing God always leads to obedience. God’s law shows His love. A deeper relationship with Christ leads to a greater desire to please Christ. And obedience is the fruit of love. So, the more we love Him, the more we will want to obey Him. Any revival that fails to encourage repentance (sorrow) for having broken His law is not good. Religious excitement may spark a quick religious high. But there will be no lasting spiritual change.

Read 1 John 2:3–6 and 1 John 4:7, 8, 20, 21. For the apostle John, what proof shows that one really knows God?

In these verses, John makes two very important points. First, knowing God leads to keeping His commandments. Second, loving God leads to loving one another. John’s point is clear. True spiritual life leads to a changed life. The heart of revival is not a warm feeling of being close to Jesus. It is a changed life filled with the joy of serving Jesus. God’s great goal in all revivals is: (1) to pull us closer to Him, (2) to make our surrender to His purpose a deeper experience for us, and (3) to use us for witness and ministry (work done for God).

How do you act in your personal relationships? What do those relationships tell you about your own walk with the Lord? In what ways might you need to make improvement in both your relationship with God and with others?



Knowing God leads to obedience. To love God is to love His law.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 20

FORMALISM,⁴ FANATICISM,⁵ AND FAITH (Matthew 23:27, 28)

One of the challenges of true revival is breaking through cold formalism. At the same time, we need to avoid red-hot fanaticism. Formalism is locked-in traditions.⁶ It is satisfied with the outside shell of religion. And it does not encourage real faith. Fanaticism, however, often goes too far. It acts on wild religious ideas. Most of the time it is unbalanced. It focuses on (pays attention to) one part of faith and neglects all others. Fanaticism is often self-righteous (full of false pride) and critical or fault finding. The apostle Paul longed for the Christian church to “no longer be babies in the faith. We won’t [will not] be like ships tossed [thrown] around by the waves. We won’t [will not] be blown here and there by every new teaching. We won’t [will not] be blown around by the cleverness and tricks of people who try to hide their evil plans” (Ephesians 4:14, NlrV).

Read Matthew 23:27, 28; Luke 11:39, 40; and Mark 7:5–9. What do we learn about cold formalism in Jesus’ criticism against the Pharisees?

Read Matthew 7:21–23. What do we learn about the people who thought that signs and wonders proved that they were Jesus’ faithful followers?

The deeper issue in both of these experiences is how serious the heart is that follows God. Signs and wonders can never take the place of true Bible faith. They do not take the place of surrendering to the will and Word of God. True revival is a faith built so deeply that it leads to an obedient life that is faithful in doing God’s will. True revival based on the Bible proves John’s words, “That’s [that is] because everyone who is a child of God has won the battle over the world. Our faith has won the battle for us” (1 John 5:4, NlrV).

“What kind of faith is it that overcomes the world? It is that faith that makes Christ your own personal Savior. It is the same faith that sees your helplessness to save yourself. Then it takes hold of Jesus as your only hope.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, page 21.

Which side would you lean toward: formalism and tradition or experience and excitement? If you lean too much toward one side or the other, how can you find the right balance?

4. formalism—following religious rules without experiencing any true religious feelings or change in life or heart.

5. fanaticism—going too far in religious ideas and actions.

6. traditions—human-made rules that have no basis in Bible teachings.



Fanaticism leads to an unbalanced spiritual life.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 21

**MINISTRY AND MIRACLES
(2 Thessalonians 2:9–12)**

True revivals focus on ministry.⁷ False revivals direct attention to “wonderful” signs. Often false revivals depend on miracles. True revivals encourage the idea that the greatest miracle is a changed life.

The healing miracles of Jesus prove the fact that He is the Messiah. As our merciful Savior, He is concerned with lessening human suffering. But He is even more concerned with saving everyone through His healing grace.⁸ The purpose of Jesus’ saving ministry is “to seek and to save” lost humans (Luke 19:10, NKJV). One time Jesus speaks to the religious leaders about a paralytic.⁹ He says, “ ‘I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority [power] on earth to forgive sins.’ ” Then He said to the paralytic, “ ‘Get up. . . . Take your mat and go home’ ” (Matthew 9:6,

NirV). The people who witness this miracle praise and give glory (honor) to God (Matthew 9:8).

Miracles were common in Jesus’ saving ministry. But they were not the main reason He came to earth.

What can we learn from 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12; Matthew 24:11–13, 24; and Revelation 19:20 about how people can be deceived (fooled) in the last days?

Such people are deceived by false miracles “because they did not receive the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, NKJV). When people are more interested in “wonderful” miracles than in the desire for a new life in Christ, their minds are easier to deceive. The parable (story) of the rich man and Lazarus closes with Jesus’ wise words, “ ‘Abraham said to him, “They do not listen to Moses and the Prophets [special messengers]. So they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” ’ ” (Luke 16:31, NirV). In other words, “wonderful” signs can never be better than understanding and then following God’s Word. Obedience to God is most important. Signs and wonders always come next.

What kind of miracles have you experienced in your own life, in your own walk with the Lord? What have you learned from them? How important are they to your faith?

7. ministry—the work of helping and saving souls.

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

9. paralytic—someone who cannot move his or her body.

THURSDAY—AUGUST 22

**FRUITS AND GIFTS
(1 Corinthians 12:4–7)**

According to 1 Corinthians 12:4–7; Romans 12:4–8; and Ephesians 4:11–16, what are some of the important reasons that God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His church?

The gifts of the Holy Spirit might be divided into two large groups. Some gifts are qualities,¹⁰ such as helpfulness and cheerfulness. Other gifts are callings.¹¹ For example, God gives people gifts in helpfulness and hospitality, giving advice or encouragement, teaching, and leading others. These gifts are qualities that God gives to certain believers (Romans 12:6–8). Others get the call to be apostles (teachers for God), prophets (special messengers for God), evangelists,¹² and pastor/teachers. These are callings given to certain believers (Ephesians 4:11, 12). Both groups of gifts serve nearly the same purpose. They have been given by the Holy Spirit to believers to make the spiritual life of the church stronger and to prepare it for mission (service). Spiritual gifts are not there to improve self. Instead, they have been given by God for the good of His church.

What does the apostle Paul mean when he uses the words “Walk in the Spirit” in Galatians 5:16, NKJV? Read Galatians 5:22–25, and list each fruit that comes from walking in the Spirit. Read also John 15:1–7.

Any so-called revival is dangerous if it is more focused on having the gifts of the Spirit, and if it finds the fruit (results) of the Spirit not important. Suppose God gave the gifts of the Spirit to believers who were not showing the fruit of the Spirit. Then the church would be filled with selfish people. Suppose God turned heaven’s power upon spiritually weak people? Then this would lead to terrible results. There are religious groups that are interested in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. But they are not interested in obedience to God’s will. They are not interested in a changed life that shows the fruit of the Spirit.

What do you say to someone who has experienced a “miracle” from God? How can you help him or her to know if it truly was from God or from Satan? How does our knowledge of the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan) help us when we try to understand who (Christ or Satan) is responsible for miracles?

10. qualities—good features or traits (the things that make you who you are, such as being honest and faithful) of a person.

11. callings—the calls from God to serve Him in whatever way He leads. For example, some people are called to be pastors, prophets, or teachers.

12. evangelists—preachers who travel from place to place, sharing the gospel.



A changed life shows the fruit of the Spirit.

FRIDAY—AUGUST 23

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Christians do not appreciate the promise of the Spirit as they should. The power of the Spirit is not yet fulfilled [completed] as it might be. So the absence of the Spirit makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Christians may have talents, skills, and gifts. But without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched and no sinner will be won to Christ. But if believers are connected with Christ or have the gifts of the Spirit, the poorest and least educated of Christ’s disciples will have a power that will be felt by hearts. God makes them servants for the out-working of the highest influence [the Holy Spirit] in the universe.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 328.

“The apostle’s sincere pleas were not fruitless [giving poor results]. The Holy Spirit filled believers with mighty power. Many people who had wandered into strange paths returned to their former faith in the gospel. So they were faithful to the freedom given by Christ. Their lives showed the

fruits of the Spirit—‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering [patience], gentleness [kindness], goodness, faith, meekness [humbleness], temperance [self-control]’ [Galatians 5:22, 23]. The name of God was given glory. And many new people were added to the number of believers throughout that area.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Teachers and Leaders]*, page 388.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Think deeply about the difference between a cold church and a church filled with wild excitement. Are they always different? For example, could a church be emotional and cold at the same time? If so, how might such coldness be understood? Why would either one, or both, be harmful to revival and reformation?¹³ What about your own local church? Where does it stand in this area? How could you help it to find the right balance?
- 2 What proof can we see of false revivals going on in the world? How can we know that they are false? But would it be wrong to believe that God is working a revival among those who love the Lord but do not know the things that we do?
- 3 In class, go over your answer to Thursday’s question about someone who thinks that he or she has had a “wonderful” experience with God. What can you learn from one another’s answers?

13. reformation—a change for the better in beliefs, practices, lifestyle, habits, and actions.