

Reformation:¹ The Results of Revival²



SABBATH—AUGUST 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Chronicles 20:17–20; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Revelation 2:1–6; Romans 1:16, 17; Revelation 14:6, 7, 12.

MEMORY VERSE: “The One who makes people holy and the people he makes holy belong to the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters” (Hebrews 2:11, NlrV).

REVIVAL TAKES PLACE DAY BY DAY IN A PERSON'S LIFE. Daily our Lord invites us into the joy of His presence. For example, Israel was fed by the manna, or food, that fell from heaven. And in the same way, Jesus spreads out a spiritual feast for us every day. So, daily our souls are fed and our spirits and hearts refreshed as we pray to God and think deeply upon His Word. Such true, spiritual renewal leads to a change in our thoughts, habits, and lifestyle. This is what we call a “reformation.”

“Dear friends, you already know that. So be on your guard. Then you won't [will not] be led down the wrong path by the mistakes of people who don't [do not] obey the law. You won't [will not] fall from your safe position. Grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Get to know him better. Give him glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:17, 18, NlrV). Peter says here, “grow in grace.” And the word *reformation* means “growing in grace.”³ This is because reformation lets the Holy Spirit join and work God's will in every part of our lives. In those areas where we have started to disobey God, revival helps to bring us back to God. Reformation leads us to make the right choices. And it leads us to surrender anything that separates us from God.

1. reformation—the ongoing process in which a person changes his or her lifestyle in order to follow God's will after having accepted Christ as Savior.

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

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

SUNDAY—AUGUST 25

**THE PROPHETS' (SPECIAL
MESSENGERS') APPEAL⁴ FOR
REFORMATION
(2 Chronicles 20:1–20)**

God often sent His prophets to lead Israel into revival. And reformation regularly followed these times of revival. Notice that even when God's people turned away from Him, they were still His chosen people. Again and again, God sent His messengers to guide them back. The examples of revival and reformation in the Old Testament often follow almost the same pattern.

Revival and reformation occurred in the Old Testament when people decided to obey God's will. When Israel turned to its own way, "the people did anything they thought was right" (Judges 21:25, NIV). Then God withdrew His blessing. So the nation faced trouble and defeat.

In one example, God's people faced one of their greatest challenges. It was a battle with the Ammonites and Moabites. King Jehoshaphat showed wonderful spiritual leadership. Throughout the crisis, the king tried to keep the eyes of all Israel focused on the power of God (2 Chronicles 20:12).

What advice did the king give to his people? What spiritual pattern of revival and reformation do we see here?

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–20. Then write in your own words what Jehoshaphat instructed Judah to do.

"God was the strength of Judah in this terrible time. And He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in human leaders. Nor should we put them ahead of God. We are to remember that humans are weak and make mistakes. We also need to remember that God, who has all power, is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His weapons have no limit. And He has the ability to turn impossible things into victory."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, page 217.

Jehoshaphat's experience shows how important revival and reformation are. He leads Israel into a time of fasting, praying, trusting, and obeying God.

In your own times of stress and challenges, how can you learn to use the spiritual principles (important rules) shown here? What is the only way to truly make use of faith?



God is our strong tower of defense.

4. appeal—a call to the people to turn back to God and change their lifestyle.

MONDAY—AUGUST 26**PAUL'S APPEAL FOR
REFORMATION IN CORINTH⁵
(2 Corinthians 7:8–12)**

Paul writes a letter to the Corinthians.⁶ He shows great concern for their spiritual condition. Many members have turned away from being faithful to God. The sexual impurity is so serious that Paul says such a level has not been seen even among the pagans (non-believers) (1 Corinthians 5:1). There are many problems that Paul has to discuss. If we read the letter, we can understand why the Corinthian church needed revival and reformation.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 1 Corinthians 13:13; and 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2, 27, 28. What advice does Paul give the Corinthians about their spiritual lives? What is the main idea in these verses?

The apostle Paul encourages the Corinthians to hold on to their faith. They are to make God's glory (praise and honor) an important goal of their lives. Paul reminds the Corinthians of his love. He also tells them that the power of God is greater than any temptation they face (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8–12. How

well does the Corinthian church follow Paul's advice?

Paul is glad about the Corinthians' answer. But he still has concerns. He writes, "I am glad I can have complete faith in you" (2 Corinthians 7:16, NIV). What a change! In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul scolds them for being carnal.⁷ In his second letter, he speaks of his complete faith in their new experience with God. The Holy Spirit brings the Corinthians spiritual renewal. This revival leads to reformation. Reformation leads to changed habits, changed lives, and changed relationships. The Corinthians still face spiritual challenges. They have their share of problems, but they make progress in their Christian faith. Revival and reformation are not "medicine" that can solve all of our spiritual problems. They are part of a continuing faith journey.



It is a mistake to think revival and reformation are "medicine" that can solve all our spiritual problems.

5. Corinth—a city-state and church in Greece.

6. Corinthians—believers in the church of Corinth.

7. carnal—being a slave to sin.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 27**REVELATION'S APPEAL (CALL)
FOR REFORMATION IN EPHESUS
(Revelation 2:1–6)**

The seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3 are examples of how the Christian church was throughout the centuries (many hundreds of years). This is the opinion of many Bible students throughout the centuries. Seventh-day Adventist leaders and thinkers have historically accepted this position, too.

The angel instructs John to “ ‘write down what you have seen. Write about what is happening now and what will happen later’ ” (Revelation 1:19, NIV). The vision of the seven churches is about the past, the present, and the future. It gives an example of the victories of God's church and its failures and defects (flaws). These seven churches can show a historical example of Christian faith down through the centuries. But there are important lessons in each of these churches for God's people today.

For example, Ephesus gives a perfect example of heaven's appeal for revival and reformation.

Read Revelation 2:1–6. What are the good things about the church in Ephesus? But what are the problems, too?

Ephesus is an example of the New Testament church from A.D. 31 to A.D. 100. These early Christians are on fire

for their faith. They work very hard to push the gospel forward. The disciples (followers of Jesus) carefully guard the purity (freedom from sin) of church doctrine (teachings). They have no patience for false teachings. And they are fierce defenders of truth.

But, as time goes on, the members begin to lose their “first love.”⁸ They put duty ahead of love for Jesus. Doing Jesus' work becomes more important than their relationship with Him. Slowly their experience with Jesus begins slipping away. They are working hard to defend the faith. But something important is missing in their spiritual experience. Love for Jesus and for one another is lacking (missing).

What was it like when you first came to know Jesus? How can you still keep that “first love”? Why is it so important that you do? What dangerous things may lead you away from that love?

**Ephesus****Thyatira****Sardis****Smyrna****Philadelphia****Pergamum****Laodicea**

The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 represent the Christian church at different times throughout the centuries.

8. first love—when Christians first accept Jesus, they are very excited about sharing truth with others. This is called the “first love.”

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 28**LUTHER'S APPEAL FOR REFORMATION (Romans 8:1–4)**

When we think of the word *reformation*, our minds may naturally turn to the Protestant Reformation⁹ and Martin Luther. Until then, western Christianity strictly followed tradition.¹⁰ Because of this, the teachings of the church became more important than the teachings of Jesus. Tradition became more important than the Bible. And many Christians were controlled by fear. They had little or no faith in salvation. Confused, they struggled to believe that God really wanted to save them.

It was at this important point of religious history that God raised up Martin Luther and several others to lead His people into a thorough reformation. Luther himself had struggled with the guilt of his own sins for years until he fully understood the true meaning of the gospel.

Read Romans 1:16, 17; Romans 3:21–25; Romans 5:6–11; and Romans 8:1–4. Why did these verses have such a powerful influence on Luther's life? Why are they so important in leading us to a revival (new birth; awakening) of faith and reformation?

“Sinners can be forgiven and made righteous [holy] by God only

when He pardons their sins and holds back the punishment they deserve. God also treats them as if they were really blameless and had not sinned. He receives them into His favor and treats them as if they were righteous. They are made righteous alone through the righteousness [holy life] of Christ. The Father accepts the Son. And through the cleansing sacrifice of His Son, the Father accepts the sinner.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 3, page 194.

Understanding grace is life changing. It is what Christianity is. God's undeserved grace is the cornerstone (important foundation) of our faith. Through the life, death, return to life, and priestly ministry [work] of Jesus, the gift of eternal life is ours. Receiving it by faith, we have the assurance (promise) of salvation.

Revival is connected to appreciating the gift of grace every day. There is nothing more spiritually uplifting than the daily joy of knowing that God is good and gracious (kind). Reformation is when we simply live out that grace in all that we do.

Salvation is found in what Christ has done for you. Think deeply about the great hope. Why must that truth be the starting point of any revival and reformation in your life?

9. Protestant Reformation—a movement, started by Martin Luther, where people rebelled (fought) against false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1400s and 1500s.

10. tradition—human-made rules and customs (practices).



The gift of eternal life is ours through the life and work of Jesus.

THURSDAY—AUGUST 29

HEAVEN'S APPEAL FOR AN END-TIME REFORMATION (Revelation 14:6, 7, 12)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a reform movement. It was raised up by God to restore Bible truths forgotten and lost for many centuries. The Holy Spirit worked powerfully through the Reformers. But there were important truths that they did not fully understand. God still had more truth to give to His people.

God does not want us to understand truth just to fill our minds with more religious knowledge. Bible truths are windows into His very heart. They show something about His character (who God is). The more clearly that we understand the truths of His Word (the Bible), the more completely we will understand how deep His love is. False doctrine twists

His character. Truth unmask the devil's lies and shows who he really is. (For example, eternal suffering in hell is a perfect example of what lies in Satan's heart).

From the beginning of the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan) in heaven, Satan has tried to twist the character of God. He has lied about God's plans for His people. But Jesus showed what His heavenly Father was like through: (1) the life that He lived, (2) the truths that He taught, and (3) the death that He died.

Read God's end-time message of revival and reformation found in Revelation 14:6, 7, 12. Read carefully what is said there. What do these verses teach us about the character of God?

God's end-time message of the "everlasting gospel" calls people to obey God's will as the judgment hour nears. The judgment in Revelation shows to the whole universe both the justice and mercy of God. During this time of belief in evolution,¹¹ Jesus' message of reformation also calls His people back to worship the Creator on the true Bible Sabbath. The Sabbath is a shield that protects against the error of Darwinian¹² evolution and against the false picture of God that it gives.

What does it mean that the whole foundation of these messages is

11. evolution—a theory that the differences between modern plants and animals came about because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long period of time.

12. Darwinian—the theory of evolution was started by a scientist named Charles Darwin.

the “everlasting gospel”? How can you believe every day in the promise that this gospel message is for you, no matter what mistakes you have made? Why is it so important that every day you claim the gospel message for yourself?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 30

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “A revival and a reformation must take place under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival shows a renewal of spiritual life. It renews the powers of mind and heart. It also is a return to life from spiritual death. Reformation shows a reorganization. It is a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices [ways]. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit [results] of righteousness if it is not connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their chosen work. In doing this work they must join together.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 25, 1902.

“Whatever their work may be, it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy¹³ rather than principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave results with God. The world owes a debt of thanks to men of prin-

ciple, faith, and courage for the great reforms that happened because of them. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 460.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In the call for revival and reformation, what must come first, revival or reformation?
- ② Why are revival and reformation things of the heart more than anything else? Why must they start with each person? Each of us needs to make a mental choice to renew our walk with the Lord, to bring ourselves closer to Him, and to try more seriously than ever to do His will. What is the danger of waiting for the person next to you in the church to do this? What is the danger of waiting for the pastor to start this? Why must you, yourself, now, make the choice to surrender even more fully to the Lord so that He will work in you?
- ③ Nothing could kill the call to revival and reformation more than criticizing (scolding) those who do not seem to live up to the principles that we think they should. How can we learn to avoid that dangerous trap while standing for the truths that God expects us to follow?

13. policy—a human-made set of rules or ideas about what should be done.