

# Obedience: The Fruit of Revival



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Matt. 26:69–74, Acts 5:28–32, 6:3–10, 9:1–9, Phil. 2:5–8.*

**Memory Text:** “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, NKJV).

An illustration of the impact of revival on daily life can be seen in the Welsh Revival of 1904. Evan Roberts and some of his friends began earnestly praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They interceded, studied Scripture, and shared their faith.

The Spirit was poured out in response. Lives were changed. In six months there were one hundred thousand conversions in the small country of Wales. The results of this revival were seen throughout the country. Throughout the day people flocked to churches by the thousands for prayer. The rough cursing coal miners were transformed into kind, courteous gentlemen. Even the pit ponies in the coal mines had to learn new commands because the miners were not cursing at them anymore! Transformed, obedient lives sprang from converted hearts. This is irrefutable evidence of a true revival.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 3.*

## The Transformed Life

Revival does not simply result in some warm, fuzzy feeling of supposed closeness to Jesus. It results in a changed life. There were times when the Bible writers felt extremely close to Jesus, and at other times they felt distant. There were times when their spirits soared in ecstasy, and they delighted in the joy of His presence. At other times, they did not feel the nearness of His presence at all.

The results of revival are not necessarily positive feelings. They are a changed life. Our feelings are not the fruit of revival. Again, obedience is. This is evident in the lives of the disciples after Pentecost.

**Analyze** Peter's reactions before the Cross, after the Resurrection, and after Pentecost. What do you notice? What difference did the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost make in Peter's attitudes?

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*Matt. 26:69–74:* Peter's reaction before the Cross.

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*John 21:15–19:* Peter's reaction after the Resurrection.

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*Acts 5:28–32:* Peter's reaction after Pentecost.

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The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost made a dramatic difference in Peter's life. It transformed him from a weak, vacillating believer to a faith-filled, obedient disciple. Once full of brash words and empty promises, Peter now became filled with faith, courage, and zeal for witnessing. It is a powerful example of what the Holy Spirit can do for anyone surrendered in faith and obedience to our Lord.

## The High Cost of Obedience

One of the early examples of faith, and the cost of faith, can be seen in the life of Stephen.

**How** is Stephen described in the following passages? *Acts 6:3–10, 7:55.*

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The infilling of the Holy Spirit led the disciples to live unselfish, godly lives. Their faith led them to obedience. At times the spiritual warfare was fierce, but Jesus, their Savior and Lord, was by their side to strengthen their faith. They were stoned, imprisoned, burned at the stake, and shipwrecked. Their obedience also often came with an unusually high price. Many of the disciples suffered a martyr's death.

In Acts 7, Stephen preaches a magnificent sermon outlining the history of Israel. He describes the experience of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon. Throughout his appeal, Stephen describes God's faithfulness in the light of Israel's unfaithfulness. Stephen concludes his sermon by charging that the religious leaders of Israel violated God's covenant and resisted the influence of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 7:51, 52*).

**What** happened to Stephen because of His witness for Jesus? What does this teach us about what the cost of faithfulness can be? *Acts 7:54–60.*

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Stephen was obedient to the call of God and faithful to the mission of God, even to the point of death. Though we might not all be called to die for our faith, we need to be so committed to our Lord that, if we were called to that, we would not back off but, like Stephen, remain faithful to the end. It's not out of the realm of possibility that someone reading these words right now will one day have to give up his or her life in the cause of the Lord.

**What would happen were you to face a life-threatening situation because of your powerful witness? Though you might not be able now to predict what you would do, how have your past actions revealed the way in which you might react if one day you were brought into such a situation?**

## When the Spirit Surprises

Although Saul was misguided in his fierce persecution of Christians, he thought he was doing God's will in confronting what he believed to be a fanatical sect. As Saul journeyed to Damascus to capture Christians and drag them back to Jerusalem, Jesus dramatically surprised him. Saul's Damascus road experience changed not only his life, but it changed the world, as well.

**Read** the account of Paul's conversion experience in Acts 9:1–9. Why did the Lord send him immediately to Ananias after this experience? What important lesson is here for us?

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“Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

“When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

**How** did Jesus surprise Ananias? What attitude must Ananias have had in order to follow the Savior's instructions? Acts 9:10–16.

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Try to put yourself in the position of Paul after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. What a shock to him. Also, try to put yourself in Ananias' position. What a shock it must have been to him, as well. What do these accounts teach us about the ways in which we might be called by the Lord to face and do things that, at the time, we don't understand? Why, though, must we obey the Lord regardless?

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## Sensitivity to the Spirit's Call

Throughout his ministry, Paul was guided by the Spirit, convicted by the Spirit, instructed by the Spirit, and empowered by the Spirit. In his defense before King Agrippa, he described the heavenly vision on the Damascus Road. He then testified that the purpose of his ministry to both the Jews and Gentiles was “ ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” ’ ” (*Acts 26:18, NKJV*).

**In** light of the Holy Spirit's guidance, what is significant about the apostle Paul's response to his Damascus road vision? Contrast Paul's response to the call of the Holy Spirit to King Agrippa's response. *Acts 26:19–32*.

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In direct contrast to Paul, King Agrippa did not yield to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. His own self-inflated importance and egotistical desires were in conflict with the Spirit's prompting for a new life in Christ.

Jesus stated it clearly: “ ‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light’ ” (*John 12:35, 36, NKJV*).

As we obediently follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walk in the light of God's truth, He will continually reveal more light and truth. At the same time, too, the more that we push away the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the more that we resist Him, the harder our hearts will become.

**“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”** (*Acts 26:28*). Those are some of the most poignant, powerful, and sad words in all the Bible. In what ways can we be in danger of harboring a similar attitude? For instance, how does compromise in our walk with the Lord reveal the same principle that is seen in Agrippa's words?

## Spirit-Led Obedience

The Holy Spirit played a major role in every aspect of Jesus' life. He was "conceived of the Holy Spirit" (*NKJV*) and "anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*NKJV*) at baptism—the birth of His ministry (*Matt. 1:20; 3:16, 17; Acts 10:34–38*). Throughout Christ's life, He was obedient to the Father's will (*John 8:29, Heb. 10:7*).

**Read** **Philippians 2:5–8.** What aspects of a life filled with the Holy Spirit appear in this specific description of Jesus?

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He who was "in the form," or the very essence, of God, "made Himself," or as the original Greek text of the New Testament says, "emptied Himself" of His privileges and prerogatives as God's equal and, instead, became "a servant."

Jesus was a servant to the Father's will. He "humbled Himself" and became "obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (*Phil. 2:8*). Jesus provides an example of what a life filled with the Holy Spirit is like. It is a life of willing obedience and humble submission to the Father's will. It is a prayerful life devoted to service and ministry, a life consumed with the passionate desire to see others saved in the Father's kingdom.

The apostle Paul declares that Spirit-filled, New Testament believers have "received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name" (*Rom. 1:5, NKJV*). The heathen, on the other hand, "are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath" (*Rom. 2:8, NKJV*).

**In Romans 6:15–23, Paul uses two contrasting expressions, "slaves of sin" (*NKJV*) and "slaves of righteousness" (*NKJV*). In Romans 8:12–17, he describes the "spirit of bondage" and the "Spirit of adoption." What does your own experience with the Lord, with faith, with the struggle against sin, and with acceptance from God tell you about the meaning of these terms?**

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**Further Study:** “At the entrance gate of the path that leads to everlasting life God places faith, and He lines the whole way with the light and peace and joy of willing obedience. The traveler in this way keeps ever before him the mark of his high calling in Christ. The prize is ever in sight. To him God’s commands are righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 183.

“The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer’s love and of His saving grace. The men and women, who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Acts 5:1–11. What can we learn from this powerful, and to some degree, frightful story? Why do you think that they faced such dire consequences for their actions?
- 2 Dwell on Thursday’s study, which talked about how Jesus “emptied Himself” in order to fulfill what He came here to do. How can we take that principle and apply it to ourselves, in our walk with the Lord? Why, especially, as we seek for revival and reformation in our lives and in the church, is this kind of self-denial and death to self so crucial?
- 3 “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (*Acts 26:28*). In class, talk more about the implications of those fateful words.

## A New Leaf

Danilo paced the floor in anger. *What right does Mom have to send me away?* he asked himself. She hasn't been here for me for years.

Danilo's parents had divorced when he was five years old. He and his brother lived with his father, who drank heavily. By the time Danilo was 12, he was drinking too. Then friends offered him cocaine, and soon he was hooked. He started selling cocaine to pay for his own drugs. When his mother found out, she gave him an ultimatum: Go into rehab or go to a boarding school. Fearful for her son, she took Danilo to live far from his friends.

Danilo stopped using drugs for a while, but when he went to live with his dad, he started using drugs again. Danilo needed money for drugs, and a friend suggested that they rob a pizza parlor. But the manager recognized his friend and called the police. The boys were arrested.

While Danilo waited for his father to bail him out, he had time to think about what he had done. He remembered that when he was little his parents had taken him to church and taught him to pray. For the first time in years Danilo prayed. "God, if You take me out of this situation, I'll change my life."

The judge sentenced Danilo to probation. Danilo wanted to change his life, so his father asked a cousin to help enroll Danilo in a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school near the capital city of Brazil. Danilo didn't have money to study at the school, but his cousin helped him to get a part-time job to help to pay his tuition. At school, he started reading the Bible and felt God drawing him to Himself.

Danilo enjoyed his studies and made the best of his second chance. He has given his life to Jesus and is thrilled to know that God is changing his life one day at a time. "I feel free now, freer than I've ever felt. There's no high like the high I get from praising God," he says.

The school sponsors several outreach activities, and Danilo enjoys sharing his new faith with others, especially his parents and brother. He prays that one day the family will be united in Christ, who is changing him completely.

Our mission offerings help to establish and strengthen Seventh-day Adventist schools where young people's lives can change forever. Part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is helping to build a church on the campus of Central Brazil Adventist Academy, where Danilo studies and is preparing to become a leader for God. Thank you.

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