

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. 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?

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

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

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

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 a 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.*

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 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.*

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?

“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.

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?

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.*

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, 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?

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?

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.

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Acts 5:28–32*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Study the relationship between revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the resultant obedient life. Recognize that there is no authentic revival without a transformation of our lives. All true revival leads to the desire to do God's will.

Feel: Delight in the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence and power to convict, convert, and empower each believer to live a transformed life.

Do: Daily seek to please Jesus by living in harmony with His revealed will.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Understanding the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

- A** What is the greatest evidence of a Spirit-filled life?
- B** How can you tell if you are truly filled with the Holy Spirit?
- C** How did the lives of both Peter and Paul demonstrate the fruits of genuine revival?

II. Feel: Desiring to Please Him in All Things

- A** Why do we find it so difficult at times to live an obedient life that is in harmony with God's will?
- B** Read Acts 5:28–32 aloud in class. What do these verses say to you personally about a life filled with the Holy Spirit?

III. Do: Obeying in the Power of the Spirit

- A** Why do we so often live such Spiritless lives when Christ offers us so freely the gift of His Holy Spirit?
- B** Where are you on your spiritual journey? Which situation of Peter describes your journey best: his reaction to Christ before the Cross, after the Resurrection, or after Pentecost? Describe Peter's three reactions, and apply them to your own life.
- C** Does the experience of Jesus say anything about the cost of obedience in our own lives?

► **Summary:** Revival always leads to obedience. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit results in the fruit of the Spirit manifest in the life.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Philippians 2:5–8*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The Holy Spirit’s power is revealed in transformed lives. Our emotions or feelings do not testify to the genuineness of a revival. The real evidence is the positive changes in our lives.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize the examples set by Peter, Stephen, Paul, and especially Jesus, of spirit-filled lives seeking to do God’s will. The main point of this week’s lesson is that the Holy Spirit’s power, manifested in revival, leads to obedience to God’s will.

One of the attendees at an evangelistic meeting visited the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the very first time. A few days later she commented to the evangelist that, although she believed the new truths she was learning at the evangelistic meetings, she would not be returning to church. When he asked why, she said something like this: “Well, you see, pastor, in our church the Holy Spirit is poured out each week. People speak in tongues. They have visions, and they prophesy. I want to see and feel the power of the Holy Spirit in action, and I did not see it here.”

This lady was certainly right to expect to attend a Spirit-filled service, but her perception of the ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself was certainly mistaken. In this week’s lesson, we will focus especially on how the Holy Spirit is revealed in a changed life. The power of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily revealed in signs and spectacular wonders. It is always revealed in hearts that seek to do God’s will. In a future lesson in this series on revival, reformation, and mission, we will carefully study how to distinguish between the true and false manifestations of the Spirit. In this study, we will examine the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus.

Discuss With the Class: As you studied your lesson this week, what common thread of the Holy Spirit’s work did you see in the lives of these four major Bible characters: Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus?

►STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: There is no greater model of a life filled with the Holy Spirit than the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus reveals what a Spirit-filled life looks like. Jesus is the heart of all revival. Without Him there is no revival. In His life we discover what revival looks like. There probably is no passage in the Bible that demonstrates this more clearly than *Philippians 2:5–8*.

Bible Commentary

I. Understanding His Divine Nature *(Review Philippians 2:5, 6 with your class.)*

In this passage, the apostle Paul carefully explains the very essence of Christ's divine nature. He begins by stating, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" (*Phil. 2:5, 6, NKJV*). Paul uses the expression "Christ Jesus." His usual way of referring to our Lord is Jesus Christ. Why the change? It is likely that He wants to emphasize the divine nature first. So, He begins with Christ. The name Jesus was given by the angel to Joseph because He would "save His people from their sins" (*Matt. 1:21, NKJV*). It dealt with the Incarnation.

The Divine Christ was in the "form of God" or the very essence of God from the days of eternity. The Greek word for "form" is *morphe*. It denotes all of the characteristics and attributes of God. All of the eternal qualities that are part of the Father's inherent nature are found in Christ. Consequently, Christ did "not consider it robbery to be equal with God." In other words, Christ did not think it unusual in any way to exist on a level of equality with God. That is who He was. He did not have to seize or grasp equality with God. It was part of the essence of His nature.

Consider This: Jesus existed with His Father from eternity past. He never had a beginning and never will have an ending. Why is the eternal nature of Christ essential in the plan of salvation?

II. Understanding His Supreme Sacrifice *(Review Philippians 2:7, 8 with your class.)*

Amazingly enough, this Christ, who was equal with the Father, "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming

in the likeness of men” (*vs. 7, NKJV*). Jesus voluntarily emptied Himself of His privileges and prerogatives as God’s equal. He left the honor and glory of heaven and tabernacled or dwelt in human flesh in order to redeem us. The One who was in the form of God came in the form of a servant. It would have been an infinite humiliation for God to become a man (Christ), but it is unthinkable that He would become a servant. Becoming a humble, obedient servant is more amazing still. Becoming a humble, obedient servant who dies the most shameful of all deaths, the death of the cross, is even more extraordinary. Jesus descended from the exalted heights of heaven to the depths of despair so that we could ascend from the depths of despair to the exalted heights of heaven.

What does a Spirit-filled life look like? Look at the life of Jesus, and you will see a Spirit-filled life. He was born of the Spirit, filled daily with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, and ministered in the power of the Spirit (*Luke 1:35, 4:18, Matt. 3:11–17*). Jesus lived in order to bring glory to the Father. In His life, He revealed what the Father was like. This is why He said, “‘I always do those things that please Him’ ” (*John 8:29, NKJV*). He was an obedient Son, committed to doing His Father’s will, living a life of glory to God (*Heb. 5:8, Matt. 26:39, John 17:4*). His life reflects the fruits of true revival—an obedient life.

Consider This: Why is it necessary to be completely committed to Christ, to be willing to please Him in anything He asks, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Peter, Stephen, Paul, and especially Jesus, modeled in their lives the results of complete consecration to God. The transforming power of God’s grace leads to obedience. Here is a modern story that illustrates the same principle. Share this story and invite your class to share any similar illustrations.

Dave and Jane claimed to be committed Christians. They attended church weekly, offered a short prayer at meals, and occasionally prayed together, but something was missing in their lives. Their marriage was in deep trouble. Arguments often punctuated their discussions. The latest TV programs captivated their interest, and it seemed boring to read the Bible and pray. Through a series of unusual circumstances, they became part of a small Bible-study group. Gradually, they developed a hunger for God’s Word. Over time, significant changes took place in their lives. The things about which they once

so fiercely argued seemed to make little difference. Prayer and Bible study became precious times of fellowship with God. There was a dramatic change in their thinking. The motto of their lives became, “Jesus, the desire of my heart is to please You.”

This is the result of true spiritual revival. When our hearts are renewed by His grace and our minds are saturated with His Word, we long to please Jesus by living godly, obedient lives.

Activity: Ask your class members if there is anyone among them who has a similar story to share. Invite the student to share it with the class.

► **STEP 4**—Create

Just for Teachers: If obedience is the fruit of revival, what does this tell us about any so-called revival that does not lead to obedience? Encourage each class member to reflect on his or her own life through the following thought questions. Ask your class members to meditate prayerfully upon each of them for a minute or two.

Thought Questions:

1 In what ways am I personally experiencing spiritual renewal each day? In what ways is my heart being revived by the Holy Spirit daily?

2 In what ways does my life reflect the renewing power of the Holy Spirit? What are the areas in my life that I have not yet surrendered to Jesus? What holds me back from surrendering them?
