



PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

SOME THOUGHTS ON REVIVAL, REFORMATION, AND PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Jim Buller

The church has declared 2011 to be the year of revival and reformation. This is most encouraging! Special books on the subject have been published, and revival meetings are being held. A quotation from *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887, has become a watchword, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”

Closely connected with the ideas surrounding revival and reformation is prayer for the “latter rain” outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This connection is essential, as, “A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit.” (*Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902.) The “777” movement is encircling the globe—7th-day Adventists praying 7 days a week at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. It envisions the fulfillment of a quotation from *Review and Herald*, January 3, 1907. “A chain of earnest, praying believers should encircle the world ... to pray for the Holy Spirit.” This is most appropriate, as we have been told, “Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.” And, “Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us.” Zechariah 10:1, *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 508.

Jesus promised to send us the Holy Spirit. He said, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it nether sees Him nor knows Him: but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” John 14:16-17. And a special “latter rain” outpouring of the Spirit has also been promised. “He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain.” Joel 2:23. Jesus also told us, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Luke 11:13. Apparently God wants to give us the Holy Spirit even more than we may want to receive it.

But these promises are conditional. The following quotations, taken from *Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 506-512, points out the relationship of the “early,” or “former rain,” to the “latter rain,” and what we must do to receive these outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

“The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection.”

“Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.”

“At no point in our experience can we dispense with the assistance of that which enables us to make the first start. The blessings received under the former rain are needful to us to the end.”

We can have all the Spiritual blessing that the early disciples had, as the “early rain” outpouring of the Spirit is still available to us! However, as these quotations point out, it is not enough to just pray for the Holy Spirit. Our hearts, “must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit.” *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411, adds to this idea. “The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his [that is, the man's] desire and consent implanting in him a new nature.” Whether we actually receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit depends not so much on God's promise to send it, or on how much we have prayed for it, or even how many people are joining us in prayer; it depends on how much we individually want it, and to what extent we allow the Spirit to work in and through us.

“There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out his Spirit upon a

languishing church and an impenitent congregation. ... When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come." *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887. God *wants* to pour out His Spirit on His people. If we are not experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it is because *we* have not prepared the way "by removing every hindrance," for "*when the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come!*"

"As ministers, as Christians, we must work to take the stumbling-blocks out of the way. We must remove every obstacle. Let us confess and forsake every sin, that the way of the Lord may be prepared, that He may come into our assemblies and impart His rich grace." *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.

"The Lord did not lock the reservoir of heaven after pouring his Spirit upon the early disciples. We, also, may receive of the fullness of his blessing. Heaven is full of the treasures of his grace, and those who come to God in faith may claim all that he has promised. If we do not have His power it is because of our spiritual lethargy, our indifference, our indolence. Let us come out of this formality and deadness." *Review and Herald*, June 4, 1889.

Let's not deceive ourselves by thinking we have done our part by simply joining the global pray chain for the Holy Spirit. It will require some exertion on our part to remove "every hindrance," to overcome our "spiritual lethargy" and Laodicean "indolence." It will also require *humility*, which goes directly against our human nature, because we naturally seek "that which is least spiritual and humiliating." (*The Great Controversy*, page 572.) Remember that in the beginning, right after Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God; and how at the end, the people will be crying out to the rocks and mountains, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne." (See Genesis 3:8, and Revelation 6:15-16.) Our sinful human nature comes up with unnumbered schemes to avoid a direct contact with God. But, if we allow our human nature to have its way, we will end up eternally lost. Let us be careful that we don't deceive ourselves by continuing to "hide" from God, even though we might be going through the motions of praying for the Holy Spirit and attending revival meetings. Let us be sure that we have surrendered every part of our being to the "abiding," indwelling Holy Spirit. We need to be honest with ourselves and ask, are we "hiding," or are we "abiding?" (See John 3:19-21.) "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." James 4:10.

As we remove every hindrance and surrender to be used by His Spirit, revival and reformation *will* result. But remember that "reformation," means things will be "re-formed" —made different, changed! Things will not be the same anymore. But most of us don't like change. Let us be careful that we don't subconsciously resist revival and reformation because of our fear of change. Revival and reformation *does* not, and *can* not consist simply of holding a set of meetings, and then going back to the way things have always been. "The people must be taught not to be satisfied with a form of godliness without the spirit and power." (*The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.)

There must be “a corresponding increase of real spiritual life.” (*The Great Controversy*, page 463.)

As stated earlier, the promise of the Holy Spirit is conditional. So it would be presumptuous to simply pray for the Holy Spirit, without also working to prepare the way for the Spirit’s outpouring in our individual hearts. “It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions upon which mercy is to be granted, it is presumption.” (*The Great Controversy*, pages 472.) If we are to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we must stop being lazy Laodicean Christians, and stop going through the motions of “playing church.” We must empty ourselves of every hindrance and defilement, to make room for the Spirit to fill us and abide in us. (See also Ephesians 5:18 and John 14 :16-17.)

A lot is also being said about revival and reformation causing an increase in witnessing. This will be true. But let us be careful we don’t get the proverbial cart before the horse. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “You shall receive power *when* the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be witness to Me.” And in John 15:5 He said, “He who *abides in Me, and I in him*, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (All emphasis supplied.) As a *result of* our connection with God we *will* witness. Jesus would not have one who is connected to, and empowered by Him to be *fruitless*. (See Luke 13:6-9.) We must be careful, with our strong Laodicean tendencies, that we don’t continue hiding from God, and yet try to *show* that we have been “revived,” by increasing of our witnessing activities —we must also be especially careful we don’t encourage or facilitate others to do this. Otherwise we may find ourselves in the group described in Matthew 7:21-23, who *thought* they were working diligently *for* God, but never really connected *with* Him; and in the end received the denunciation “I never knew you.”

Our only safety is to humbly lay aside our desire to hide from God, and work to increase the depth of our connection with Him. As we confess our waywardness, search the Word for His wisdom, surrender to Him, and pray for the indwelling Holy Spirit, we *will* be revived, empowered, and reformed. The inevitable result of this experience will be increased witnessing of what the Lord is doing for us.

“Preparing to Stand”

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It has been said that if we do not share our faith among fellow believers, we will not witness to the world. Unfortunately, the way we typically *do* church has been training our people to sit back, keep quiet, and let the pastor do all the work! If our people are going to do more witnessing, and “finish the work,” we first need to seek for a revival of increased spirituality among us, but we also need to re-form, and change the way we do things —one of them being the way we do church. So how should things be done differently? The following is a collection of quotations regarding why sermons should *not* be the regular thing for church —and what we should do instead.

ELLEN WHITE QUOTATIONS REGARDING NOT HAVING A SERMON EVERY SABBATH, OR FOR EVERY MEETING

Evangelism, page 348, (Letter 192, 1906)

It has often been presented to me that there should be less sermonizing by ministers acting merely as local pastors of churches, and that greater personal efforts should be put forth. Our people should not be made to think that they need to listen to a sermon every Sabbath. Many who listen frequently to sermons, even though the truth be presented in clear lines, learn but little. Often it would be more profitable if the Sabbath meetings were of the nature of a Bible class study. Bible truth should be presented in such a simple, interesting manner that all can easily understand and grasp the principles of salvation.

Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, November 27, 1883

Improvements can be made in our manner of conducting camp-meetings, so that all who attend may receive more direct labor. There are some social meetings held in the large tent, where all assemble for worship; but these are so large that only a small number can take part, and many speak so low that but few can hear them. By districting the encampment, so that several meetings, each in charge of a leader, will be held in selected tents, all may be benefitted. On the Maine camp-ground, some meetings of this character were very interesting and profitable; in others, much of the precious time was occupied by the leader in doing the talking himself, while the people had but little opportunity. In one tent the leader occupied all the time except ten minutes, and that meeting was a failure. Did this brother love his neighbor as himself? In some instances much time was devoted to singing. There was a long hymn before prayer, a long hymn after prayer, and much singing interspersed all through the meeting. Thus golden moments were used unwisely, and not one-half the good was done that might have been realized had these precious seasons been properly managed.

There should be Bible-readings in place of some of the regular discourses; ...

Gospel Workers, page 76

Ministers should become efficient in teaching others how to study the Bible ...

Testimonies for the Church Volume Six, page 88

There must be less sermonizing and more tact to educate the people in practical religion.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Six, page 87-88

It has been shown me that our camp meetings are to increase in interest and success. As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching and more Bible study. There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures.

This was the method that Christ taught His disciples. ...

The Desire of Ages, page 152

He did not sermonize as men do today.

The Ministry of Healing, page 143

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Six, page 68-69

Whenever practicable, every important discourse should be followed by a Bible study. Here the points that have been presented can be applied, questions can be asked, and right ideas inculcated. More time should be devoted to patiently educating the people, giving them opportunity to express themselves. It is instruction that men need, line upon line, and precept upon precept.

Special meetings also should be held for those who are becoming interested in the truths presented and who need instruction. To these meetings the people should be invited, and all, both believers and unbelievers, should have an opportunity to ask questions on points not fully understood. Give all an opportunity to speak of their perplexities, for they will have them. In all the sermons and in all the Bible studies, let the people see that on every point a plain "Thus saith the Lord" is given for the faith and doctrines which we advocate.

This was the method of Christ's teaching. As He spoke to the people, they would question as to His meaning. To those who were humbly seeking for light, He was always ready to explain His words. But Christ did not encourage criticism or caviling, nor should we. When men try to provoke a discussion of controverted points of doctrine, tell them that the meeting was not appointed for that purpose.

Selected Messages Book 1, page 127

Sermons have been in great demand in our churches. The members have depended upon pulpit declamations instead of on the Holy Spirit. Uncalled for and unused, the spiritual gifts bestowed on them have dwindled into feebleness. If the ministers would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and by use their capabilities would increase.

Christ's Object Lessons, page 328

The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Six, page 362-3

Everyone should feel that he has a part to act in making the Sabbath meetings interesting. You are not to come together simply as a matter of form, but for the

interchange of thought, for the relation of your daily experiences, for the expression of thanksgiving, for the utterance of your sincere desire for divine enlightenment, that you may know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Communing together in regard to Christ will strengthen the soul for life's trials and conflicts. Never think that you can be Christians and yet withdraw yourselves within yourselves. Each one is a part of the great web of humanity, and the experience of each will be largely determined by the experience of his associates.

We do not obtain a hundredth part of the blessing we should obtain from assembling together to worship God. Our perceptive faculties need sharpening. Fellowship with one another should make us glad. With such a hope as we have, why are not our hearts all aglow with the love of God?

We must carry to every religious gathering a quickened spiritual consciousness that God and His angels are there, co-operating with all true worshipers. As you enter the place of worship, ask the Lord to remove all evil from your heart. Bring to His house only that which He can bless. Kneel before God in His temple, and consecrate to Him His own, which He has purchased with the blood of Christ. Pray for the speaker or the leader of the meeting. Pray that great blessing may come through the one who is to hold forth the word of life. Strive earnestly to lay hold of a blessing for yourself.

Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, January 8 1895

Let the churches say to those who preach the word: "Go into the cities and villages, and preach the warning. You are God's watchmen on the walls of Zion, and however much we should be gratified to have your labors, we shall not hold you with us. We shall draw for ourselves from the treasure house of heaven by living faith. We shall not take upon ourselves the work of sermonizing, but we will fear God and serve him, and speak often one to another. Not one of us shall be guilty of seeking the supremacy, or of cherishing a burning zeal for speechifying; but in humility of mind, we shall speak often one to another of our individual experiences in our daily life, and shall present the precious things we have found in the word of God by digging for it as for hidden treasure. We shall work in simplicity, and shall pray much, that as sharp sickles our prayers may follow God's delegated sowers and reapers as they go forth into the harvest-field.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Seven, page 18-19

It weakens those who know the truth for our ministers to expend on them the time and talent that should be given to the unconverted. In many of our churches in the cities the minister preaches Sabbath after Sabbath, and Sabbath after Sabbath the church members come to the house of God with no words to tell of blessings received because of blessings imparted. They have not worked during the week to carry out the instruction given them on the Sabbath. So long as church members make no effort to give to others the help given them, great spiritual feebleness must result.

The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers. Let them learn to work as Christ worked. Let them join His army of workers and do faithful service for Him.

There are times when it is fitting for our ministers to give on the Sabbath, in our churches, short discourses, full of the life and love of Christ. But the church members are not to expect a sermon every Sabbath.

Let us remember that we are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, seeking a better country, even a heavenly. Let us work with such earnestness, such devotion, that sinners will be drawn to Christ. Those who have united with the Lord in the covenant of service are under bonds to unite with Him in the great, grand work of soul saving. Let church members, during the week, act their part faithfully, and on the Sabbath relate their experience. The meeting will then be as meat in due season, bringing to all present new life and fresh vigor. When God's people see the great need of working as Christ worked for the conversion of sinners, the testimonies borne by them in the Sabbath service will be filled with power. With joy they will tell of the precious experience they have gained in working for others.

Early Writings, page 114-115

The Lord has shown me that great interest should be taken by Sabbathkeepers to keep up their meetings and make them interesting. There is great necessity of more interest and energy being manifested in this direction. All should have something to say for the Lord, for by so doing they will be blest. A book of remembrance is written of those who do not forsake the assembling of themselves together, but speak often one to another. The remnant are to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Some expect to overcome alone by the blood of the Lamb, without making any special effort of their own. I saw that God has been merciful in giving us the power of speech. He has given us a tongue, and we are accountable to Him for its use. We should glorify God with our mouth, speaking in honor of the truth and of His unbounded mercy, and overcome by the word of our testimony through the blood of the Lamb.

We should not come together to remain silent; those only are remembered of the Lord who assemble to speak of His honor and glory and tell of His power; upon such the blessing of God will rest, and they will be refreshed. If all moved as they should, no precious time would run to waste, and no reproofs would be needed for long prayers and exhortations; all the time would be occupied by short, pointed testimonies and prayers.

Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, September 10, 1895

Those who speak of the goodness of God, who talk of the plan of salvation, who relate their personal experiences, who speak often one to another, are serving God in his own ordained way, and are honoring their Redeemer, and he says that such shall be honored, even as a father honors a son who is faithful and affectionate. Let every one consider the value of the social meetings, and let not large or small companies of believers think that they cannot have an enjoyable season unless they are entertained by a preacher. Where this dependence on the minister exists, the people fail to obtain that vigorous religious experience which they so much need wherever their lot may be cast. If the minister alone does all the witnessing, then those who have newly come to the faith become dwarfed and sickly for lack of opportunity to use their spiritual muscle. They have need to learn how to testify, how to pray, how to sing, to the glory of God: but failing to do this, they have only a one-sided experience. The children of God are to

grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. They are to be faithful in their service to God. They are to learn the trade of being spiritual worshipers of God, and it is only by practice that we learn to speak and pray to the edification of those who listen. Let us remember that angels are in the assembly of the saints, Christ in the midst to impress the mind with spiritual truths. The humblest believer, who may regard his talent as of little value, will find that by exercise of his powers, his talents will increase, and using the mites, he may gain pounds by trading with his abilities for the glory of God. Consecrate to God your mental, spiritual, and physical powers, and they will grow as they are used in the service of the Master.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Three, page 210

Instead of our ministering brethren laboring among the churches, God designs that we should spread abroad and our missionary labor be extended over as much ground as we can possibly occupy to advantage, going in every direction to raise up new companies. We should ever leave upon the minds of new disciples an impression of the importance of our mission. As able men are converted to the truth, they should not require laborers to keep their flagging faith alive; but these men should be impressed with the necessity of laboring in the vineyard. As long as churches rely upon laborers from abroad to strengthen and encourage their faith, they will not become strong in themselves. They should be instructed that their strength will increase in proportion to their personal efforts. The more closely the New Testament plan is followed in missionary labor, the more successful will be the efforts put forth.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 120-121

Ministers should impress upon the people the necessity of individual effort. No church can flourish unless its members are workers. The people must lift where the ministers lift. I saw that nothing lasting can be accomplished for churches in different places unless they are aroused to feel that a responsibility rests upon them. Every member of the body should feel that the salvation of his own soul depends upon his own individual effort. Souls cannot be saved without exertion. The minister cannot save the people. He can be a channel through which God will impart light to His people; but after the light is given, it is left with the people to appropriate that light, and, in their turn, let it shine forth to others. The people should feel that an individual responsibility rests upon them, not only to save their own souls, but to earnestly engage in the salvation of those who remain in darkness. Instead of looking to Brother and Sister White to help them out of their darkness, they should be earnestly engaged in helping themselves. If they should begin to hunt up those worse off than themselves, and should try to help them, they would help themselves into the light sooner than in any other way. If the people lean upon Brother and Sister White, and trust in them, God will humble them among you or remove them from you. You must look to God and trust in Him. Lean upon Him, and He will not forsake you. He will not leave you to perish. Precious is the word of God. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." These are the words of Christ. The words of inspiration, carefully and prayerfully studied and practically obeyed, will thoroughly furnish you unto all good works. Ministers and people must look to God.