

ANNUAL COUNCIL ACTION

Voted 10/11/2010

God's Promised Gift

AN URGENT APPEAL FOR REVIVAL, REFORMATION, DISCIPLESHIP, AND EVANGELISM

God has uniquely called the Seventh-day Adventist Church both to live and to proclaim His last-day message of love and truth to the world (Revelation 14:6-12). The challenge of reaching the more than 6 billion people on planet Earth with His end-time message seems impossible. The task is overwhelming. From a human perspective, the rapid fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission anytime soon appears unlikely (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The Church's growth rate is simply not keeping pace with the world's burgeoning population. An honest evaluation of our current evangelistic impact on the world leads to the conclusion that unless there is a dramatic change we will not complete Heaven's assignment in this generation. In spite of our best efforts, all our plans, strategies, and resources are incapable of finishing God's mission for His glory on earth.

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The challenge of taking the gospel to the world is not new. The disciples faced this challenge in the first century. We face it in the twenty-first century. The New Testament Church was seemingly confronted with an impossible task. But empowered by the Holy Spirit the Church exploded in growth (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31). These early Christians shared their faith everywhere (Acts 5:42).

The grace of God overflowed from their hearts to their families, friends, and working associates. Just a few decades after the Crucifixion, the apostle Paul could report that the gospel is "preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).^{*} How was it possible for an obscure group of relatively insignificant believers to impact the world in such a short amount of time? How could so few Christians be used of God to change the world forever?

Christ's Great Commission was accompanied by His great promise. The Savior commanded His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The Savior promised, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The love of Christ controlled every aspect of the lives of the disciples and moved them to a passionate commitment to His service. They sought God for the promised power of the Holy Spirit and knelt before Him in heartfelt confession and earnest repentance. They placed priority on seeking Heaven's blessing. They set aside times for prayer and searching the Scriptures. Their petty differences were swallowed up in their all-consuming desire to share Christ's love with everyone they met. They were absorbed in reaching the world with the gospel. Nothing was more important. They recognized that they were powerless to accomplish the mission without the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Describing the experience of the disciples, Ellen White wrote, "Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. . . . Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. . . . The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the Holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ promised" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37).

Christ fulfilled His Word. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecostal power. Thousands were converted in a day. The message of Christ's love impacted the world. In a short time the name of Jesus Christ was on the lips of men and women everywhere. "By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593).

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS END-TIME CHURCH

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in the early rain was only a prelude of what is to come. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit in abundance in the last days (Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). The earth will be "illuminated with his glory" (Revelation 18:1). The work of God on earth will be finished rapidly (Matthew 24:14; Romans 9:28). The Church will experience a spiritual revival and the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power like never before in its history. Speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter gives us this assurance: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). Ellen White adds, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and his Word. Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 464).

Hundreds of thousands of people will accept God's last-day message through the teaching and preaching of His word. Prayer, Bible Study and witness are the elements of all true revival. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit will intensify as the end approaches, "Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of Man." (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 333) and "By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 612).

There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus, studying His word, understanding His truth and seeking His promise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the fulfilling of the gospel commission. God's last-day prophet to the remnant wrote in words too plain to be misunderstood, "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" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 121).

If a genuine spiritual revival is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs, should we not as leaders place priority on seeking Heaven’s promised blessing with all our hearts?

OUR GREAT NEED: REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

When we seek Jesus, He fills us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We long to know Him better. The Holy Spirit reawakens the dormant spiritual faculties of the soul. There is nothing we desire more than to have a deep and life-changing relationship with Jesus. The revived heart experiences a vital connection to Jesus through prayer and the Word. Reformation is the corresponding change that comes in our lives as the result of revival.

“A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend” (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 128). Reformation does not manifest itself in a self-righteous attitude that condemns others. It is the transformation of character that reveals the fruits of the Spirit in the life (Galatians 5:22-24). Obedience to God’s will is the evidence of all true revival. Our Lord longs for a revived people whose lives reflect the loveliness of His character. There is nothing that Jesus desires more than a people who are passionate about personally knowing His love and sharing that love with others.

COMMITMENT AND APPEAL

As leaders and representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church assembled at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the 2010 Annual Council, we give thanks to our great and awesome God for His faithfulness and abundant blessings to His Church since its inception. The rapid worldwide expansion of His Church in both its membership and institutions is nothing short of a miracle of God. Although we praise Him for marvelously working to fulfill His purposes through His church, and thank Him for the godly leaders who have guided His people in the past, we humbly acknowledge that because of our human frailties even our best efforts are tainted by sin and in need of cleansing through the grace of Christ. We recognize that we have not always placed priority on seeking God through prayer and His Word for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power. We humbly confess that in our personal lives, our administrative practices, and committee meetings we too often have labored in our own strength. Too often God’s mission of saving a lost world has not taken first place in our hearts. At times in our busyness doing good things we have neglected the most important thing—knowing Him. Too often petty jealousies, ambitions, and fractured personal relationships have crowded out our longing for revival and reformation and caused us to labor in our human strength rather than in His divine power.

We accept the clear instruction of our Lord that “the lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ’s parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

We are confident that all heaven is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit in infinite power for the finishing of God's work on earth. We acknowledge that the coming of Jesus has been delayed and that our Lord longed to come decades ago. We repent of our lukewarmness, our worldliness, and our limited passion for Christ and His mission. We sense Christ calling us to a deeper relationship with Him in prayer and Bible study and a more passionate commitment to share His last-day message with the world. We rejoice that "it is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600).

Therefore, as representatives of the world church and on behalf of our entire membership, we commit ourselves:

1. To personally place priority on seeking God for spiritual revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power in our own lives, our families, and our ministries.
2. To individually set aside significant amounts of time daily to fellowship with Christ through prayer and the study of God's Word.
3. To examine our own hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of anything that may keep us from revealing the character of Jesus. We desire willing hearts so that nothing in our lives hinders the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power.
4. To encourage the ministries of the Church to spend time praying, studying God's Word, and seeking God's heart to understand His plans for His Church.
5. To encourage each of our church organizations to set aside time for administrators, pastors, health-care workers, publishing house workers, educators, students, and all employees to seek Jesus and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit together through a study of God's Word and prayer.
6. To use every available media outlet, conference, and workshop to appeal to church members to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus for the promised revival and reformation.
7. To urgently appeal to and invite our entire church membership to join us in opening our hearts to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, which will transform our lives, our families, our organizations and our communities.

We especially recognize that God is going to use children and youth in this last mighty revival and encourage all of our young people to participate in seeking God for spiritual revival in their own lives and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to share their faith with others.

We appeal to each church member to unite with church leaders and millions of other Seventh-day Adventists seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at 7:00 each morning or evening, seven days a week. This is an urgent call to circle the globe with earnest intercession. This is a call to total commitment to Jesus and to experience the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit that our Lord is longing to give now.

We believe that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power is to finish Christ's mission on earth so He can come quickly. Recognizing that our Lord will only pour out His Spirit

in its fullness on a Church that has a passion for lost people, we determine to place and maintain revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism at the top of all our church business agendas. More than anything else we long for Jesus to come.

We urge every church administrator, departmental leader, institutional worker, health worker, literature evangelist, chaplain, educator, pastor, and church member to join us in making revival, reformation, discipleship, and evangelism the most important and urgent priorities of our personal lives and our areas of ministry. We are confident that as we seek Him together, God will pour out His Holy Spirit in abundant measure, the work of God on earth will be finished, and Jesus will come. With the aged apostle John on the Isle of Patmos we cry out, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

*All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version.