Have you ever wondered what role (if any) the Holy Spirit might have after the close of human probation? Once His mission to act as Christ’s personal representative, or vicar, on Earth comes to an end, will the Spirit any longer have a distinctive role, and if not, what is to become of this Third Person of the Godhead? Then again, have you at times tried to imagine how we will ever be able to see this presently invisible One or to touch Him, once we ourselves have been given the gift of immortality?

Well, don’t worry—we shall not here endeavor to attempt to explain, in the present issue featuring the Holy Spirit, that which has not been revealed to men! Wisely, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary offers the following counsel: “There has been much speculation regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit, but revelation has been largely silent on this subject. His personality is implied, for He is presented as performing the acts of a person. He searches, knows, intercedes, helps, guides, convicts. He can be grieved, lied to, resisted. He is listed with other Persons—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son—in such a way as to imply that He, too, is a Person. But regarding His essential nature, silence is golden” (p. 505).

Herself under Heaven’s inspiration, Ellen White stated that "after the close of the canon of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue [His] work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God" (The Great Controversy, p. viii). She also commented on the fact that Joel’s prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit "will reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the Gospel" (ibid., p. ix). The profound mysteriousness surrounding the Holy Spirit is nothing new. Acts 19 recounts an incident during Paul’s Third Missionary Journey when he arrives in Ephesus, capital of the Roman province called Asia (in the western portion of Asia Minor). Upon "finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (vv. 1, 2).

Imagine that! Twelve Christian disciples that don’t even know Who the Holy Spirit is! But wait a minute before coming down too hard on these Ephesian brethren. Is it possible that even among Christians in our own day there are some, truly, who really know nothing of the Holy Spirit’s peculiar roles and functions? The Spirit is so often talked about, His operations even shamefully distorted, and yet so little experienced personally. Given the great light God has been pleased to shed on the generation of these last days, willful ignorance on this subject is profoundly to be regretted. In an earlier age "God winked at the times of this ignorance" (Acts 17:30); in our generation it cannot longer be so.

But despair not, friends. Though all too often much of what we know has been sadly neglected or left entirely unimproved, there is much that we do know of the workings of the Spirit of Jesus. This issue of Adventists Affirm offers some fresh perspectives that will greatly repay the time you take to meditate on them. As you do so, you will be assimilating quite a variety of thoughtful and provocative insights into our need of Him in our lives. In previous issues we have already dealt with such counterfeit forms of the Spirit as are often manifested in charismatics and tongues-speaking. You may wish to consult the list of previous issues in the back of the current one.

To get you started just now, consider this quote from Doug Batchelor’s sermon: "Do you want to be filled with the
Spirit? Are you aware of what you are praying for? If you pray for the rain, you may get caught out in the storm. There is significant difference between the talk and the walk, isn’t there?

Ron Clouzet approaches the same topic of our great need of the indwelling Spirit from a somewhat different angle. He says, “Without the Breath of God, we are mere frozen children of circumstance.” Keep reading to find out exactly what he means by that. Elder Clouzet writes from Southern Adventist University in Tennessee.

Next, new contributor Helene Thomas documents her own personal struggle to yield completely to the Spirit’s control. "Every time we are tempted to ignore the voice of the Spirit in some ‘small’ thing," she says, "we should beware of the ripples we cannot see." Surely all of us experience the tension of opposing forces in our lives. The Christian life is, indeed, a battle and a march. Helene writes from her home in Georgia.

Dr. Koranteng-Pipim always seems to bring entirely fresh insights to the understanding of God’s Word. This time, in his coverage of Acts 2, he discloses something that took place far away from old Jerusalem—an “unknown truth regarding what actually took place on the Day of Pentecost.” "On that day, in the courts of Heaven above,..." well, I don’t want to give away the wonderful surprise! You’ll have to read it for yourself.

Author Richard O’Ffill, as have authors Batchelor and Clouzet, contributes another facet to the gemstone called the infilling of the Holy Spirit. In one place he says that "the fruit of the Spirit is not Heaven’s wish list for the believer." Something else is to be "the deciding factor for those who will finally be saved." It would seem more than prudent to learn what that something is. See if you can discern it for yourself as you read through the article.

As a former Muslim, Shakeela Bennett brings to her essay a perspective not to be gainsaid. Perhaps it will shock some out of their complacency to learn that "as individuals and corporately, God’s people must be so convicted of the absence of His Holy Spirit among us, that we prostrate ourselves and offer up fervent prayers for His latter rain to fall upon us. We will then be reminded that we are God’s remnant church and that we have been given a great responsibility to sow the seeds of truth, together with faith in that truth." Catch the larger context by reading carefully her entire article.

Professor Emerita Beatrice Neall (Union College) served for many years with her pastor-husband Ralph in the missionary work in Cambodia. Bea contributes a piece that reads like the most exciting fiction. But there is much more that riveted my attention until the very end of this account. Find out what happens when true revival breaks out. Pray that it will happen again and again!

Are you concerned that the campuses of certain Seventh-day Adventist institutions are too lenient and that parents aren’t getting a return on their sacrificial (in many cases) investments in their children’s Christian education? Would you believe that such a condition of things presents no barrier to genuine revival? Please read Laurel Damsteegt’s "sequel" to Dr. Neall’s previous article. It thrills us to the depths of our souls when the Laurels we have invested in can say many years afterward: "I will forever know the infectiousness of a Spirit-filled meeting; soulful prayers; simple but prayerful songs sung to God."

Speaking of thrills, "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." These are a few of the consoling words from the pen of God’s messenger for our times. This issue appropriately concludes with Ellen White’s inspired insight into the ministry of the Holy Spirit for just such a time as this. May our gracious, merciful Lord bless you, dear readers, with the unction of His Holy Spirit as you read, ponder, and absorb the precious material in your hands. Our prayer is that your faith be AFFIRMed in the process.
There is effort involved in seeking after God.
Not because God is not willing to bestow His blessings upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive them.

When he began his ministry John the Baptist said, "I indeed baptize you with water…but there is One coming after me Who is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says (John 3:34), "For God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure. He did not have a gas gauge that said, "You are full, that is enough. It was a limitless supply of the Holy Spirit that Jesus possessed.

When God launched the New Testament church, He poured out His Spirit. The seeds that Jesus had been sowing through His life sprouted and began to grow.

We have yet to see the latter rain. The latter rain is the rain, the outpouring of the Spirit that prepares the church for the great harvest when Jesus comes. He is coming to harvest the world, so we need this second outpouring of the Spirit to prepare the world for the return of Jesus.

In the same way that the former rain fell on those who already knew Christ, those who had a relationship with Him, the latter rain is going to fall on God's people. We need that desperately now.

The Holy Spirit not only comes in different degrees, the baptism of the Spirit can come more than one time. For instance, in Acts 2 we see the Holy Spirit being poured out. Then again in Acts 4 and 5 the Holy Spirit is poured out. The place was shaken and they spoke the Word of God with power.

In the parables that Jesus tells in Matthew 24 and 25, He depicts the church's condition prior to the Second Coming. One of those parables deals with the ten virgins. Fifty percent of those ten virgins are not prepared for the great wedding feast. What was it that distinguished between those who were ready and those who were not ready? The amount of oil they had. They all had some of the Spirit but some had more than others. Some did not have enough. A church with a form of religion and no power does not have enough of the Holy Spirit.

Our most desperate need is the filling of the Spirit. When you have a church that is filled with the Spirit, it will cover a multitude of other defects. If we could have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we need that more than we need our buildings. If we could have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we would get a lot farther spreading the message that we do using media. The disciples did much more without media than we are doing with television. What did they have that we are lacking? They had the baptism of the Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit. If you wait too long before you thirst for the Holy Spirit, it could be too late. It is when you are alive spiritually that you are going to crave the Holy Spirit.

"There is effort involved in seeking after God.
Not because God is not willing to bestow His blessings upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive them."
The Holy Spirit is very powerful, and God cannot trust that power to those who will abuse that power.

We go forward Spiritless so often because we figure that we have made our plans. We need to move ahead. What would happen if we could have the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Romans 8:9: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. When Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, as He came to Peter, Peter said, "No, Lord, You are not going to wash my feet. You are the Lord. I am a fisherman. It should be the other way around."

Jesus said, "If I do not wash your feet, you have nothing to do with Me. You are not Mine. I am not yours." It made Peter shudder to think that he would not be Christ’s.

Peter then said, "Lord, wash my hands and my head. Wash everything, but please do not say that I do not belong to You."

The Bible says that if we do not have the Spirit of God, we are none of His. So do you want the Spirit? You cannot be God’s without the Spirit. Jesus said, "I am with you alway, even to the end." How is He with us? God is with us through the presence of His Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the most desperate need of the church.

We have many substitutes for the Holy Spirit. If we could have the Spirit we could probably do away with a lot of programs. I think we are depending on substitutes too often, so the Holy Spirit cannot do for us what He might do.

Here are some of the reasons that we need the Holy Spirit. First of all, We should not only be praying. We should be fasting and praying. If the Holy Spirit is our most desperate need, then how deeply, how earnestly, how sincerely should we plead for this most desperate need.

Jesus asked that if you have a son who is hungry and he asks for a loaf of bread, will you give him a stone? If he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent? If he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask? This is the only thing Jesus mentioned that we should specifically ask for. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." What was He saying? "Seek the Holy Spirit."

When Solomon asked "that I might have wisdom," what was he saying? Wisdom is one of the gifts of the Spirit. When Elijah asked Elisha, "What do you want?" what did Elisha ask for? A double portion of Elijah’s Spirit. It was not as though Elijah had a special patent on the Spirit. Elisha was asking for the Holy Spirit when he said, "I want a double portion of your Spirit." So what is the thing we should be pleading for to God? It is the Holy Spirit.

How earnestly should we ask for the Holy Spirit? Think about how many problems we bring on ourselves because we do not have enough Spirit. Five of those virgins ended up in the dark because they ran out of oil. How often have we been groping spiritually in the dark because we do not have an adequate presence of God, the Holy Spirit?

We need to pray. Here are some examples in the Bible. Deuteronomy 11:14: "I give you the rain in your land in due season, the first rain, the former rain and the latter rain, that you might gather in your corn and your wine and your oil." Zechariah 10:1: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain."

I want to pause right there. I have already set the stage that before the harvest of Jesus’ coming there is going to be the latter rain and outpouring of the Spirit. What is God telling us we should do during that time when it is to be expected? Ask for it. Now we should especially be asking for it. "Ask ye for rain of the Lord in the time of the latter rain." That is now. "And the Lord will make bright clouds, flashing clouds" (this text is talking about clouds that are flashing with lightening and thunder) "...and then they will give showers of rain to everyone."

Jesus has sent the promise of the Holy Spirit. He said, "If I go to the Father, the Comforter will come." He has promised to send the Spirit, but He has also said we must seed the clouds. We must pray. We must ask. The greatest gift is worth seeking for, and does not the Bible say, "The Holy Spirit is very powerful, and God cannot trust that power to those who will abuse that power."
"Seek earnestly the best gifts"? God's Spirit would be that gift. Luke 11:13 says: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?"

"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. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord" (Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 121).

There is effort involved in seeking after God. Not because God is not willing to bestow His blessings upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive them. So when we are praying for the Holy Spirit, what are we praying for? That God will prepare our vessels to receive the Spirit. "Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than our earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer" (ibid.). Would you like a revival? You can only expect it in answer to prayer.

Historically, every revival can be traced to somebody or to a group praying. When Pentecost took place, what were the disciples doing in the upper room? They were praying.

"While the people are so destitute of God's Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the Word; but when the Spirit's power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect" (ibid.).

The most urgent need that we have is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Would you like to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit? Do you know what you are really praying for when you pray for the latter rain? When you pray for the latter rain, you are praying for a storm.

Have you noticed that the storm comes to everybody in the last days? The question is not whether the storm is coming. The questions are, Just what are you building on? Is your house going to stand? Do you have enough oil in your lamp?

Now, back in the days of Elijah, when there was a terrible famine for three and a half years, people were dying. They were in desperate need of rain. They needed that rain, a symbol of God's Spirit. How earnestly did Elijah pray for rain? He prayed until it came. He got on his knees. He not only prayed, he looked, he expected it to come. He sent his servant to the coast and said, "Do you see anything yet?" The moisture typically came from over the ocean. They could always look towards the west and know when the rain was coming. The servant's answer: "Not yet."

Elijah prayed again. And he prayed again. He prayed again seven times. He kept praying until finally there was a cloud coming. Just a little cloud. That is all he needed for his faith. About the size of a man's hand. And that tiny cloud grew into a great storm.

Was that a blessing? What happened to Elijah when the storm came? He got wet. Listen. Let us read 1 Kings 18:45, 46: "Now it happened in the meantime..." that is, after the sky became "black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away." He had to ride away. The rain was so heavy he could not see where he was going. The sky was so dark he went to the nearest city, Jezreel, and "the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah."

What does the hand of the Lord mean? That is the Spirit of the Lord. The two terms are used interchangeably in the Bible. The Spirit "of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and he ran ahead of [the king] to the entrance of Jezreel."

What happened to the disciples when they prayed for the rain? They were praying in the upper room. First of all, before the story is even over we notice that the Holy Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire. Fire can sometimes burn. Fire is a purging element. Fire is hot. It represents power, and power can be a dangerous thing. So we notice that the Spirit came. The baptism of the Spirit did not come like a gentle wind. It came as a loud noise and fire. The disciples were filled the Holy Spirit.
They began to preach, and immediately they were mocked. As soon as they got the Holy Spirit they were being ridiculed and they were being mocked. Acts 2:13 says, "Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine.'" So when you pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, you may be ridiculed. Have you ever noticed somebody when that person is full of the Spirit? He has that holy enthusiasm. People say, "Ah, he is crazy." You do not have to roll around on the ground to be mocked. You do not have to babble in tongues to be mocked. You live a holy life, a Spirit-filled life, and you will be mocked.

Another thing we notice is that the Holy Spirit is very expensive. After the Spirit was poured out, the Bible declares in Acts 2, "Now all who believed were together." This is the same chapter in which the Holy Spirit was poured out. "They had all things in common, they sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. No man said that aught that he had was his own." Great sacrifice. Very expensive. Many of them lost their jobs. Peter, James, John, and Andrew. We have no record that they ever went fishing again. Matthew could not go back to his tax-collecting booth. Paul lost a very promising career in the Sanhedrin as a Pharisee. It was expensive for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The believers were imprisoned and persecuted when they received the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 2. The Holy Spirit is poured out. In Acts 3 they are put in jail. Are you ready to pray for the Holy Spirit? In those earliest days a great persecution arose against the church, that Spirit-filled church.

You know why it works this way? Most of us have easy sailing because we are no threat to the Devil. Which way would you rather have it? Would you rather have the approbation of the world and the disfavor of God?

Jesus said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! for so they did of the false prophets." If you are Spirit-filled, you are going to rile up the resistance of the enemy. Do you want the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The early believers were persecuted.

We notice something else. When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there is very little toleration for even a little sin. As soon as somebody begins to teach inappropriate theology, people jump all over him. You remember that Simon the sorcerer said, "Let me pay for the Holy Spirit" and Simon Peter the disciple came down on him very heavily. He said, "Do you think the Holy Spirit can be bought as though it is a commodity? Peter basically said, "You know where you can go with your money if you think you can pay for the Holy Spirit."

Ananias and Sapphira just told a little half-truth about their offering, and they dropped dead. They were members of the church. The Spirit of God was present in the church. The accountability level was very high. We would be conducting a lot of funerals if God showed that kind of accountability today for people who rob Him, for people being dishonest, for little things we wink at now when someone is full of the Spirit. Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will convict you of sin."

Your sensitivity about sin is heightened when you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and someone might call you a fanatic. Your love will be intensified, too, but you will not wink at sin. So when you pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, make sure that you know what you are asking for. Are you prepared to have the Lord do a purging work in your life? Sin is extremely offensive to God. Apostles were killed following the outpouring of the Spirit (see Acts 2). Acts 8 records that Stephen was stoned to death. Acts 12 recalls the death of James, who was killed by King Herod. It is a life-and-death issue. Of the 12 apostles only one died of old age. But all were Spirit-filled men.

So do you want the Holy Spirit? If you are going to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, be prepared to get caught out in the storm as Elijah was. I want the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but what are my options? "He that does not have the Spirit of God is none of His." It is either Jesus, filling me with the Holy Spirit, or being separated from Christ and flowing with the
When we harbor and cherish and feel the anger and resentment that we hold for other people, we drive out the Holy Spirit. We grieve the Holy Spirit.

Another thing we can do to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to evidence a willingness to obey God. Now you notice I did not say you have to be perfect to be filled with the Spirit. That is a misconception. I think a perfect surrender, yes, a willingness to obey God, is needed. In Ezekiel 36:27 we read, "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes." It is God’s Spirit in you that causes you to walk in His statutes.

So when the disciples received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, what they were really doing was going on their knees in the upper room and confessing their faults to one another. They were praying for one another. They humbled themselves before God. And that made room in their hearts for the Holy Spirit. God filled them with the Spirit, and they were willing to obey.

But people who boast that they have the Holy Spirit while they are walking in high-handed disobedience to God are liars. "He who says, ‘I know Him’ and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. People who are saying, ‘Lord, Lord’ and they do not the things that God says, they are hypocrites."

Hypocrisy is a dangerous thing. In Acts 5:32 Peter says, "And we are His witnesses to these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is a Witness "Whom God has given to those who obey Him." Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We often stop right there. But ignore that first period, for Jesus goes on, "If you love Me, keep My commandments and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He might abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth." If ye love Me, obey Me and I will give you the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is very powerful, and God cannot trust that power to those who will abuse that power. When you are rooted in God and led by His Spirit, you do not go whichever way the wind blows. You are being led, and it might be against the wind, but you are going with the current of God’s Spirit. So there is a willingness to obey God, a deeper power. Seeking Him in His Word, the Holy Spirit helps us understand the Word.

The filling of the Spirit often happens in connection with the proclamation of the Word. I want to say this again. The filling of the Spirit, (do you want to be filled with the Spirit?) not only comes in connection with prayer, but the filling of the Spirit often comes in connection with the study of and the proclamation of the Word. Acts 10:44 says, "While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the Word." It could happen here now. While we listen to the proclamation of the Word our hearts are stirred, our hearts are prepared. The Word of God is like a cultivator, a holy Rototiller that breaks up the fallow ground and prepares us to receive the seed.

The filling of the Spirit not only happens in public settings. Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit come upon you while you were studying on your own? And all of a sudden through some promise in God’s Word or some passage you read, you just felt the Spirit of God present? If you have both the Word and the Spirit, you grow up. We need the two of them together.

Another characteristic, something to remember that we need for the baptism of the Spirit, is to humble ourselves. Never are we farther from God than when we feel self-sufficient. Jesus said to the church of Laodicea, "You think you are rich and increased with goods. You have no room in your hearts for Me."

God cannot fill those who are already full. It is recognizing our need that prepares our hearts. What happened when the rain came in the days of Elijah? What did the people do? They fell down after Elijah prayed and fire came down from Heaven and burnt up the sacrifice of Elijah. The people fell down, they did not just kneel. They did not kneel on one knee like someone proposing. They did not just kneel on both knees. They fell on their faces and they said, "The Lord is God!" That is the best form of humbling yourself.
When David repented, he got on his face before God. Humble yourselves before the Lord.
Humble yourself unto the right hand of God. He will lift you up. All the people on Mount
Carmel said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" And when they humbled
themselves and acknowledged the Lord, then He sent the rain.

What were the apostles doing in the upper room before Pentecost? They were praying and
putting aside their differences. What had they been arguing about in the upper room prior to
the Last Supper? Which of them was the greatest! You notice the Lord did not fill them with
the Holy Spirit at the Last Supper. That is when they really needed it, but their hearts were not
prepared.

Jesus humbled Himself. He washed their feet, and they still were not prepared. It wasn’t until
they had spent some time confessing their faults and putting aside their differences that God
was able to fill them with the Spirit. Great messages can be transmitted on thin wires. God can
do great things through small lines.

A practical prerequisite for the filling of the Spirit is to get together in God’s name in God's
house. We should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. When the apostles were all
in one place, together, He waited until they were collected.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon an individual many times in the Bible. But the latter rain
experience, if I read my Bible right, is going to come something like the former rain
experience, when God’s people are going to be together, humbling ourselves, praying, putting
aside differences. They may be small groups or big groups.

At Pentecost it was a hundred and twenty, but they were together. Acts 4:31: "And when they
had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were filled
with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness." The place where they
were assembled. It is even in the Old Testament. God was getting ready to baptize the leaders
of Israel with His Spirit, and He told Moses. "So Moses… gathered the seventy men of the
elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down in the
cloud, and He spoke unto him, and the Lord took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed
the same upon the seventy elders" (Numbers11:24).

God said, "Gather the people together." They gathered at the tabernacle. He took the Holy
Spirit that He had given Moses, and that same Spirit of God’s presence came on the people.
Two individuals named Eldad and Medad did not feel worthy to come with the 70 elders. They
stayed in the camp. They thought, "We are not worthy to have Moses’ Spirit." The Holy Spirit
fell on them too. So it can happen to individuals that might be separated, yet whom God tells
them to come together. Would it not be a tragedy to have the latter rain experience fall upon
the church on the day that you stayed home? You would feel awful to think that you had
missed the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

Another prerequisite for the filling of the Spirit is to forgive. We have blisters in our vessels
that render us unfit to receive the Holy Spirit. When we harbor and cherish and feel the anger
and resentment that we hold for other people, we drive out the Holy Spirit. We grieve the Holy
Spirit. As Jesus forgave us, so we ought to forgive one another. In Acts 2, the apostles were not
only in one place, they were of one accord. They were in unity, whereas they had been
divided. They had put aside their differences. We need to forgive each other.

Probably the most important recognition we need, is a hunger and thirst for God. "O God, You
are my God; early I will seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and
thirsty land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1). Are you thirsty for God? Isaiah 44:3 says,
"For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground." God says that if
you recognize your need, He will give the Holy Spirit to him that asks. "He has filled the
hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." We need to know we are
hungry. We need to feel that thirst and that hunger for the Spirit of God, so even though we
know it may cause trouble, we still yearn for God. You want Him even if you know that it
might cost you your life. What is the alternative? Easy sailing into oblivion, or a storm clear
into eternity. These are your choices. It is a terrible choice, but you can at least have peace
because you know that you are with God and you are going the right way.

One of the last things Jesus said to the people was, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Mark, Luke, and John talk about the great commission. It is the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The Lord wants you to have the Holy Spirit. Jesus died to purchase for you that greatest gift of Himself in you, the hope of glory. That is what the Holy Spirit is—God’s presence in you. God our King wants to refresh His people. He wants to give us the sweet perfume of His Spirit. He is infinitely more willing to give than we are to ask.

The promise is that God will give water to him that is thirsty. "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; and I will give you bright clouds." Joel 2:28 promises (and it is also a prophecy): "And it will come to pass afterward (in the last days) that I will pour out My Spirit." He does not squirt, He does not sprinkle—He pours. "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. Also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke." The terrible day of the Lord is not far off. How urgently we need, how desperately we need to have the Spirit poured upon us. We need to be asking, we need to be calling. Those who are calling for the Spirit will be delivered, as God said, "among the remnant whom the Lord calls." Who comprise this remnant? We are the remnant. It is the right people. It is the right time. It is the right place. Are we doing the right thing? We need to be praying, we need to be calling. Those who are calling for the Spirit will be delivered, as God said, "among the remnant whom the Lord calls." Who comprise this remnant? We are the remnant. It is the right people. It is the right time. It is the right place. Are we doing the right thing? We need to be praying that God will pour His Spirit upon us, that sweet fragrance from above.

Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? Are you aware of what you are praying for? If you pray for the rain, you may get caught out in the storm. Do you want the Holy Spirit? He will send the water to those that are thirsty. If you really want it, you can expect it.

Father in Heaven, Lord, we know that this is our most desperate need. We are praying for what Solomon asked for. We are praying for what Elisha asked. We are praying for what the apostles prayed for, and if ever a people existed that needed the outpouring of the Spirit, this is that people. Lord, we need this more than we need anything. So please come into our hearts now. We thank You for hearing our prayer. We believe this is something You want to give us even more than we want to ask. Lord, fill us with Your Spirit that we might walk with Jesus, that we might love and forgive others, that we might have the power to witness. Everything in the Christian life is made possible, is strengthened, by having God in us. So bless us to this end, Lord, that we can be a people who really know what it means to have You with us always. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.
Why We Need the Holy Spirit

by Ron Clouzet
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Exactly 1,482 years after the first Pentecost at the foot of Mt. Sinai, Jesus made good His promise to send the Spirit to give life to His New Testament church. Rabbis called Pentecost The Season of the Giving of Gods Law. The desert that day witnessed lightning, thunder, violent quaking, and fire, as God wrote His Law in the stone (Exodus 19:16-18). Later, Jerusalem witnessed noise like a mighty rushing wind and tongues as of fire, as God inscribed His character in the hearts of the disciples (Acts 2:2-4). The Law was Gods gift to His recently freed children, one that, if appropriated, would include all other blessings for Gods people. The Spirit was Gods gift for the New Testament church that, when claimed by faith, would bring "all other blessings in its train" (The Desire of Ages, p. 672). Gods moral Law was written in Sinai by the finger of God (Deuteronomy 9:10), identified in the Gospels as the Spirit of God. Now, Christ Himself would dwell within, through the Spirit (John 14:20).

Gods Desire

This indwelling was the desire of God from times immemorial. At the foot of the mountain, three times Israel promised "all that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7). A thousand years later, through the exiled prophet Ezekiel, God promised to make up for such pathetic Israelite inability: "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you. . . I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). The fullness of the Spirit would no longer dwell in the hearts of a few individuals but, as Joel had foreseen, God would "pour out [His] Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28, 29). Sons, daughters, the old, the young, the humble. God would pour out His Spirit upon all! When John the Baptist, the man full of the Spirit from his mothers womb, bolted to life between the Testaments, he too, uttered the glorious promise: I baptize you with water, but Christ will baptize you with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11). This promise is repeated by all the Gospel writers (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:32, 33) and twice again in the book of Acts (1:5; 11:16), something unequaled elsewhere in the New Testament.

Finally, on the night of Christs betrayal, the most important subject Jesus would discuss with His followers was the coming of the Spirit. Gods day had come: Calvary would open the way to Gods greatest gift (John 7:37-39).

Thousands of references are given in the Spirit of Prophecy regarding the Holy Spirit, hundreds having to do with the baptism and the infilling of the Spirit for the Christian, including this famous admonition: "This promise [of the power of the Holy Spirit] belongs as much to us as it did to them [Jesus disciples], and yet how rarely it is presented before the people, and its reception spoken of in the church. In consequence of this silence upon this most important theme, what promise do we know less about by its practical fulfillment than this rich promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby efficiency is to be given to all our spiritual labor? . . . Prophecies have been dwelt upon, doctrines have been expounded; but that which is essential
to the church in order that they may grow in spiritual strength and efficiency, in order that the preaching may carry conviction with it, and souls be converted to God, has been largely left out of ministerial effort⁴ (Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 174).

Why such vital emphasis on the promise of the Father? Because without it Christs body would not survive, and the world would not be ready for His return.

To Witness

Note Christs burden right after His resurrection. We are told in Luke 24 that when He went to see the disciples in the upper room, He "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" concerning His death and resurrection, and commissioned them to proclaim forgiveness of sins to all nations. Then He said: "You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:44-49). Johns description of the same encounter includes Christs command, "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you," and breathing on them, He added: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21, 22). Two things appear inseparable: a witnessing commission to all nations, and the promised baptism of the Spirit to empower His disciples for such commission.⁵

Acts 1:8 makes clear that the commission is to witness more than to preach or proclaim or baptize, per se. To witness is to relay what one has personally seen and heard. In English we have just one word for both verb and noun, thus a witness bears witness. The ambiguity is helpful, for it is impossible to separate the meaning of the witness as a person from the content of the witness. This may be the reason why the New Testament word for witness is martus from which we get martyr. Martyrs are the ultimate witnesses, refusing to deny what they have seen or heard. Thus, those who have seen and heard Jesus, those who have experienced His love and guidance in a meaningful and personal way, are commissioned to witness.

This one objective, to witness, has an inward and an outward expression, much like a coin has two faces. "One interest prevailed, one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christs character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom"⁶ (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 48). Witnessing to all nations would consist of both revelation of Christs character and persuasion for the kingdom. The accomplishment of these two tasks is the reason why Jesus poured His Spirit upon the early church, and why we need a renewed baptism of the Holy Spirit today.

Christlike Character

On that last great Passover night, Christ introduced a new commandment to His disciples, and He uttered it three times: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). Can we really love one another like our Saviour has loved us? The servant of God says we cannot; it takes more than hearty willingness to do so: "The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christs nature in humanity. Gospel religion is Christ in the lifea living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart" (Christs Object Lessons, p. 384).

Ellen White clearly admits that we cannot love others like Christ does, unless the love of Christ Himself is a reality in our own lives. She explains that it is only "when self is merged in Christ," that "love springs forth spontaneously" (ibid.). In this sense, it is not my capacity to love as much as it is Christs capacity to love others through me that makes the difference. No wonder Paul asserted that our bodies are to be the temple of Gods Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16)!

The early church experienced Christlike character. Whereas the early apostles were once selfish and fearful, soon their enemies would recognize their confidence and burden for others as earmarks of their Master (Acts 4:13). Whereas the disciples were once divided, seeking for personal advantage, now the Church is noted for its unity and its willingness to share liberally with those in need (Acts 4:32-35). Whereas Christs followers were once prejudiced, soon they were open to accept others and treat them as one of their own (Acts 8:4-6; 10:28, 34-35).
A little girl once asked her grandmother while in church, "Did the preacher say that God is bigger than us?" Her grandmother assented.

"And he said that God lives inside us?"

"Yes, precious," said the older woman.

"If God is bigger than us and He lives inside us, shouldn't some of Him show through?"

The logic is impeccable. The indwelling of the Spirit is the indwelling of Jesus in our lives. When this happens, it is inevitable to reveal to the world the Christ within. Did not Paul say that those who lack the Spirit lack Christ Himself? (see Romans 8:9-11).

**Christlike Mission**

It is through the Spirit that the Christ within transforms us into His image. And through the indwelling Spirit Christ's church will impact the world for God. A Christlike character leads to a Christlike mission to prepare the world for His return.

Unfortunately, the insignificant impact made in the world by many Christians today is a testament of the Spirit wanting. Carl Bates once commented: "If God were to take the Holy Spirit out of our midst today, about 95 percent of what we are doing in our churches would go on, and we would not know the difference." That was not so in the early New Testament church. Peter's no-holds-barred sermon on the Day of Pentecost brought 3,000 to conviction (Acts 2:41). A second apostolic sermon brought 5,000 to Christ (Acts 4:4)! Signs and wonders accompanied the believers and "multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number" (Acts 5:14), even to the point that priests, their former enemies, "were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Thirty years of Spirit-led ministry by the New Testament church made Paul maintain that the Gospel had been proclaimed "in all creation under Heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

Ill never forget hearing the story at the General Conference session a few years ago in Indianapolis. Elder Carl Curry told simply of Gao Hung Tse, a Chinese deacon who could neither read nor write, and who, having a poor memory, could not share with others the Bible as read to him. Yet, he had a great burden to share the truth. Desperate one Sabbath day, he lay prostrate on the floor of his humble home and begged God for power to witness. He determined not to rise until the Lord heard his plea. Suddenly, he heard a voice telling him to read Psalm 62. As he obeyed, he actually read Psalm 62! He was so excited that he ran to tell the elder in the village, and proceeded to repeat the psalm by memory only after having read it one time. This powerful anointing of the Spirit was the answer to his prayer, and the following year, he led 180 people to baptism. In addition, he was credited with several hundred miracles of healing in and around his village.

We know that the power of the Spirit in the last days will exceed that experienced by the early church. The prophecy of Joel 2 "received a partial fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; but it will reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the Gospel" (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 292). Without this new life, the church will not see Jesus face to face, and the world will not be ready for His return.

**The Time to Act Is Now**

On a cold, frosty morning at the old farmhouse, a little boy tugged at his grandfathers sleeve as he stomped on the frozen mud puddles, giggling with delight. As they reached the barn, the grandfather stretched his arm into the large rain barrel beneath the eaves and pulled out a gleaming sheet of ice. The five-year-old was beside himself with wonder. He twisted and turned the ice as he pointed it to the sun, his grandfather leaving him to enjoy the moment while he began milking the cows.

Suddenly, the frozen toy slipped from the child's hands, shattering into a thousand shiny bits.
Undeterred, the young lad pushed and wiggled his way up the rain barrel for another. As his waist reached the top, he leaned forward, stretching his arm, his prize within his grasp. But before he could cry for help, he plunged headfirst beneath the frigid waters, his arms pinned to the sides of the barrel. In a few seconds of struggle all went black. The noise of the milking machines had kept the grandfather from knowing what happened.

But God had not forgotten the child. The milk-truck driver suddenly pulled up, yet something told him to go to the barn right away. There he found the motionless legs of the little boy sticking out from the rain barrel. After pulling the motionless body out and calling for grandpa, the man began giving him artificial respiration. He forced his own breath into the mouth of the small boy again and again until the lad coughed. He would live to see another day.

Douglas Coopers experience as a boy dramatizes for us our dire need for the Holy Spirit. Without the Breath of God, we are mere frozen children of circumstance. This is not what God has in mind for His church. "The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God. Companiesshould gather to ask for special help(The Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

"There are many who long to help others, but they feel that they have no spiritual strength or light to impart. Let them present their petitions at the throne of grace. Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

"When with earnestness and intensity we breathe a prayer in the name of Christ, there is in that very intensity a pledge from God that He is about to answer our prayer exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20)" (Christs Object Lessons, p. 147).

With such wonderful promises at our disposal, what are we waiting for?

NOTES

1. Adventist scholars reckon the first Passover in Egypt to have been on March 17, 1450 BCE. [This claim is unsupported by facts known to the editor. Adventist scholars do say that Passover probably occurred on Abib 14, but do not specify a year; cf. Exodus 12:6 and 1BC 549, 550. Ed.] Christ died in AD 31, during Passover, exactly 50 days before the Feast of Pentecost.


3. In the Old Testament, the manifestation of the fullness of the Spirit was limited to the lives of prophets like Samuel, Elijah, or Daniel, as well as a few others God empowered for specific tasks, like Bezalel or Samson. This restricted influence (the Spirit is mentioned only 88 times in the Old Testament, but 262 times in the New Testament a comparative increase of nearly 300%) became available universally after Calvary.


5. I use the term "baptism" somewhat loosely in this context. It is the anointing, the outpouring, the endowment, the blessing of grace and power to be and to do what God desires, as we shall see more clearly.

6. Even the well known wording of Matthew 28:19, 20 implies this: The commission is to "make disciples" as one goes about lifes affairs. Go(ing), baptiz(ing), and teach(ing) are all participles, and participles signify action.

7. Many statements in the Spirit of Prophecy corroborate this fact. For example, "When on the Day of Pentecost the promised Comforter descended and the power from on high was given the souls of the believers thrilled with the conscious presence of their ascended Lord" (The Great
Controversy, p. 351); and "The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ" (The Desire of Ages, p. 805).


Although the first work of the Gospel in the life is cleansing from sin, this work is only the preparation for the primary purpose, which is the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the life. 

The Fruit of the Spirit -- A Must or an Option?

Richard OFfill, Pastor and Revivalist
Author, Lord Keep Your Mansions--Just Save My Children and Lord Save My Family Before Its Too Late

It was Sabbath morning and I was a visitor. The Sabbath School teacher was talking about the Holy Spirit. She said, "Lets pray that the Holy Spirit will be poured out."

I raised my hand. "Its already being poured out," I offered; "lets pray that we will receive It [meaning Him]!"

Having been a member of the church all of my life, I believe it is true to say that when we think of the Holy Spirit we do so from the following perspectives: 1) His first work, which Jesus said was to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8); and 2) His final work, which is the latter rain that will precede the close of probation and prepare the people of God to pass through the time of trouble.

In recent years Christian churches everywhere, our church included, have emphasized another perspective to the Holy Spirit, and that is the gifts of the Spirit. Spiritual inventory tests are available which enable church members to identify their particular spiritual gifts. It is interesting to note, however, that apparently anyone can fill out the questionnaire and be apprised of their "gifts." Whether or not the person has been born again is not a prerequisite to taking the test.

What's in a name? Think back with me about what it meant through the years to be a Seventh-day Adventist. Generally we were thought of as a people who didnt smoke, drink, wear jewelry, go to movies or dance, and who kept Saturday as the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath meant we didnt listen to the radio, watch television, read newspapers, go to work, or buy or sell.

I had the good fortune of attending church school, academy, and college. In those days a student could be expelled or suspended for going to movies, holding hands with a girl, not honoring the dress codes, and, of course, for smoking or drinking.

In other words, if you asked me then what it was like to be a Seventh-day Adventist, I could have given you a long list of what we didnt do, because that was pretty much the way we saw...
I can see now how a negative approach to the Christian life could make us vulnerable to worse things. Jesus warned: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12:43-45).

Although the first work of the Gospel in the life is cleansing from sin, this work is only the preparation for the primary purpose, which is the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the life. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you [the new birth]. And I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

The promise in these verses has two components. The first is to give us a new spirit; that is, our own spirit is renewed and quickened by the work of the Holy Spirit. When this has been done, the rest of the promise states, "I will put My Spirit within you" to dwell in that new spirit.

God created man's heart for His dwelling. Where God is to dwell, He must have a habitation. With Adam He had to create a body before He could breathe the spirit of life into him. In Israel the tabernacle and the Temple had to be built and completed before God could come down and take possession. Likewise, a new heart is given and a new spirit put within us as the indispensable condition of God's Own Spirit being given to dwell within us.

But God's original purpose for man was frustrated. The purpose of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, remember, was to re-create a dwelling place of which it could be said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

While Jesus walked this earth as a man, He was personally with His disciples. But it would not be until Pentecost that the promise of John 14:16, 17 would be fulfilled: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

A wonderful and sobering thought is expressed in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods."

While not smoking and drinking or going to movies and dancing, omitting mustard, vinegar, and black pepper in the diet, worshipping on the seventh day, and following a dress code are laudable, none of these things requires that a person be born again or, for that matter, even be a follower of Christ (the Hindus are traditionally vegans).

A true Christian is one whose heart is not only swept and clean but is filled in a wonderful and mysterious way with the Holy Spirit. If and when we are able to comprehend this truth, the effect on our personal lives, and subsequently on the life of the church, will be immediate.

As the Holy Spirit is welcomed and begins His work, the fruit will begin to manifest itself in the life, producing that which is in essence the very character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are well acquainted with the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit as enumerated in Galatians 5:22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." This list, however, is not exhaustive. There are other qualities enumerated in 1 Timothy 6:11, Romans 5:3-5, 2 Timothy 3:10, and 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Jesus made it clear: Those who claim to be His followers but do not produce fruit will be plucked up and taken away (John 15:2). He also declared that, inasmuch as many will profess
to be His followers (Matthew 7:21, 22), the deciding factor will not be what they profess to believe or even what they do, but rather the kind of people they are (Mathew 12:33).

On looking back at much of our emphasis as Seventh-day Adventists in days gone by, Jesus might say to us, "These things ought you to have done, but not left the other undone." In the past we were not wrong when we said we shouldnt eat catfish, but we should have included Dont be mean. We were not wrong in teaching what not to do on the Sabbath, but we should have included Be kind. In some ways our lifestyle did not require a change of heart, only a change of mind.

Rest assured, in spite of impressions we might have received from our charismatic friends, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not lessen the impact of the letter of the law in our lives, but it will assure that we have the spirit of the law. While people can keep the letter of the law without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their lives, those who have the true Spirit in their hearts will not only keep the letter of the law but the spirit of the law as well.

To some extent we may be reaping a backlash from a superficial gospel which appears to change the outside but leaves the heart vulnerable to being occupied by attitudes that, as in the case of the Pharisees, can make our message a heavy yoke and expose a certain hypocrisy.

Those who receive the seal of God will be those who have not only been swept and cleaned but who have been the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and as a result have manifested His fruit in their lives. While we pray for the outpouring of the latter rain, we must be aware that this special gift will be given for a special purpose. And it will be given only to those whose lives are clearly recognized by their love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What will our lives be like, what will our homes be like, what will our church be like, when its members, filled with the indwelling Spirit of God, bring forth the fruit of the Spirit? The first component of the fruit of the Spirit is love.

Love. Often people will comment that all their pastor ever preaches about is love. Would that this were true! Unfortunately, what is being passed off as love these days is often far short of Biblical love. Rather, it is sentimental and indulgent.

What a change would be effected in the church if there were more preaching about true love that "suffereth long, and is kind;envieth not;vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Joy. Someone has said that happiness is because of, but joy, as a component of the fruit of the Spirit, is in spite of. Contemporary culture is ever searching for happiness. The Spirit-filled life may not always have something to be happy about, but it is always joyful.

Joy. Someone has said that happiness is because of, but joy, as a component of the fruit of the Spirit, is in spite of. Contemporary culture is ever searching for happiness. The Spirit-filled life may not always have something to be happy about, but it is always joyful.

A person does not need to be filled with the Spirit to be happy; but only God can give true joy, because joy is the result of hope. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much
more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Again and again we are admonished to rejoice (Philippians 4:4; James 1:2, 3). Perhaps the greatest model for joy is Christ Himself. Of Him it is written, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Peace. Jesus said that in the world we would have tribulation (John 16:33). The peace, then, that comes as a fruit of the Spirit is not an absence of tribulation, but in spite of tribulation. An example of this kind of peace was that exhibited by our Lord as He slept during the storm on Galilee.

Two powerful texts that promise peace to the believer are: "Great peace have they which love thy Law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165), and "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

As we begin to understand the various components that together make up the fruit of the Spirit, it becomes clear why they have been denominated as fruit and not as fruits of the Spirit. In a practical sense they are intertwined and cannot function without each other.

Longsuffering. Another word for longsuffering is patience. Patience is surrendering our strong desire to have control. That which frustrates us into impatience and the anger that often goes with it is our lack of control.

Perhaps you too have learned that it is not always wise to strike when the iron is hot, in spite of the old saying. Patience knows when the time is right and avoids taking action when the result, though having a short-term benefit, may work long-term harm.

Patience is a characteristic of Gods people in the last days. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

Gentleness. There is much similarity in the concept of gentleness and that of kindness. Gentleness is not passive but active and practical. Those who are gentle express this quality by kind deeds. Kindness brings love out into the open. Someone has said that kindness is love expressing itself.

A person who claims to love his neighbor will, when possible, express his love in kind deeds. "But whoso hath this worlds good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17, 18).

In Ephesians 4:32 we are commanded to be kind to each other. Isn’t it curious that we tend to express kindness more often to people who are strangers to us than we do to the people we love and who love us?

Goodness. It is not necessary to expound on the meaning of goodness. What may be important, however, is to understand to whom we should be good. It is here where the difficulty arises.

A key text in this respect is the one found in Luke 6:27 which says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." These words of Jesus are not a suggestion but a command. If we were obeying Jesus in this respect, it would be very difficult to break up a home, and our troubles in the church would be greatly reduced.
True goodness can come only as a fruit of the Spirit because there is none righteous, no not one (Romans 3:12, 23).

**Faith.** This quality is best understood as fidelity and faithfulness. Faithfulness is commitment. Faithfulness means, "I said it, Ill do it." It means that we will keep our word. Faithfulness means truthfulness.

Words matter. Our words and our actions must agree. Jesus may have been explaining the principle of faithfulness when He admonished, "Let your Yes be Yes, and your No No" (Matthew 5:37).

There are two important occasions in our lives that call for fidelity and faithfulness. One is when we go down into the waters of baptism proclaiming that we have died to our old lives and that from thenceforth we will be accountable to God and to His church to walk in newness of life.

The other occasion for fidelity is the marriage vow. Unfortunately, in our modern society a person is more likely to get a divorce than he is to renege on a mortgage.

Divorce and bankruptcy laws have made mockery of the Biblical principle of faithfulness. To profess one thing and do another is incompatible with the Spirit-filled life.

**Meekness.** The present generation is not the first to be proud, but it may be the first actually to have institutionalized the concept. There are hundreds of Scriptural admonitions to meekness and humility. A well-known text is Philippians 2:3-8, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The concept of meekness is foreign to this last generation of whom it was written, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:1, 2).

While there will be people saved who were not up-to-speed on the health message or who had doctrinal error here and there, Scripture is clear that among those who will not inherit the kingdom of Heaven will be the proud (Malachi 4:1). We need to remind ourselves often that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

**Self-Control.** The last component of the Spirit-filled life as enumerated in Galatians 5 is self-control. This quality is not last because it is least, but it is last because it is self-control that enables the other qualities to function in the life. Self-control does not imply we are to control ourselves by our own strength (inasmuch as it is a fruit of the Spirit). But this quality does mean that we are responsible for what we do, and for which we will be held accountable in the Day of Judgment.

There is an oft-heard word that effectively negates the concept of self-control, and that word is *dysfunction*. Although without a doubt there is a legitimate clinical use of this term, dysfunction as understood by present society is held to mean that people are not responsible for what they are or what they do.

However, the reality of a final Judgment disagrees. No matter how dysfunctional the family or environment may be, when people are filled with the Spirit they effectively get to chose what they will be.
CONCLUSION

The fruit of the Spirit is not Heaven's wish list for the believer. Rather, it is what is given to a person who abides in the Vine and will be the deciding factor for those who will finally be saved. Jesus gave perspective to the subject and wrapped it all up when He declared in John 15:1-6, "I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

There used to be a commercial for potato chips whose challenge was, "Bet you can't eat just one." So it is with the fruit of the Spirit. A person can't have just one. Perhaps we could think of the various components of the fruit of the Spirit as petals on a flower. Although the blooming of the flower is a process, the fact is that the petals unfold together.

We may not come to maturity in the fruit of the Spirit all at once, but the components must develop in tandem with each other. It is unlikely that a kind person will be impatient or proud.

When we see what God's plan is for our lives, we may at first be thrilled and challenged but later feel overwhelmed. Not to worry. The promise is that He Who has begun this good work (fruit-bearing) in us will finish it (Philippians 1:6).