

January, February, March 2017 – Part 2

*Comments on the Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide*

*The Holy Spirit
and Spirituality*

Clarification: On page 8 of *Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Part 1*, we printed the following sentence:

If God is a two-dimensional being, bodily form and spirit, then man, who is made in his image, is a two-dimensional being, as well. (p.

The pronoun *his* refers to God, but the sentence may be confusing and cause you to think the pronoun refers to *man*, so we have edited the sentence in the electronic versions to read:

If God is a two-dimensional being, bodily form and spirit, then man, who is made in God’s image, is a two-dimensional being, as well.

Correction: The comments for Wednesday and Thursday of Lesson 4 are printed as part of Lesson 3. We sincerely apologize for this error.

Introduction

The first booklet of this series offered basic background information on the biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit. If you do not have a copy of that booklet, it is available, at no cost, upon request. This second booklet will review Lessons 5–8 of the 2017 *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (ASSBSG)*, entitled “The Holy Spirit and Spirituality.”

Lesson 5 — The Baptism *and* Filling of the Holy Spirit

This lessons deals with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If there was a place that one would expect to find a discussion on the latter rain, it would be here. However, no mention is made of the early rain or of the latter rain, and no reference is made to the book of Joel in this lesson or in the rest of the study guide! Please see Appendix A for an in depth consideration of this matter.

The first part of Lesson 5 discusses the baptism of the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and the later part of the lesson attempts to discuss the conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit and the difference between a self-centered person and a spirit-controlled person.

Sabbath Afternoon, January 28 — The introduction that shows the author did not grasp the concept of cause and effect in the study. One striking sentence in the first paragraph states this about if we are without the Spirit:

We will not have the assurance of salvation and will not know the joy that comes from serving our Lord. (*ASSBSG*, p. 38)

This is true in the sense that all of those who are in Christ have the Holy Spirit (more on this later), but how can we know we are in Christ? Is it in a

feeling or an experience that we think we have received from the Spirit? The Bible tells us exactly how we may have the assurance of salvation:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:11–13)

Sunday, January 29 — John the Baptist declared that Jesus would baptize the believers “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). Interestingly, the giving of the Holy Spirit, though, is mostly noted in the Bible as a work of the Father.

And I will pray the *Father*, and he shall give you another *Comforter*, that he may abide with you for ever. (John 14:16)

But the *Comforter*, which is the Holy Ghost, *whom the Father will send in my name*, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom *God hath given* to them that obey him. (Acts 5:32)

And because ye are sons, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son* into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Galatians 4:6)

But when the *Comforter* is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. (John 15:26)

Jesus notes in John 15:26 that he would send the *Comforter*, but that this is the Spirit of truth that *proceeds* from the Father. We also read:

Jesus gives the Holy Spirit in large measure for great emergencies, to help our infirmities, to give us strong consolation, to illuminate our minds, and purify and ennoble our hearts. Christ becomes unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. From the first to the last of the Christian life, not one successful step can be taken without Christ. *He has sent his Spirit* to be with us constantly, and by confiding in Christ to the uttermost, surrendering our will to him, we may follow him whithersoever he goeth. (Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, June 26, 1894; all emphasis supplied in this booklet unless otherwise noted)

There is no comment in the lesson that concerns the baptism by fire but in *The Desire of Ages*, we read the following:

The prophet Isaiah had declared that the Lord would cleanse His people from their iniquities “by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” The word of the Lord to Israel was, “I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.” Isaiah 4:4; 1:25. To sin, wherever found, “our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them. Jacob, after his night of wrestling with the Angel, exclaimed, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Genesis 32:30. Jacob had been guilty of a great sin in his conduct toward Esau; but he had repented. His transgression had been forgiven, and his sin purged; therefore he could endure the revelation of God’s presence. But wherever men came before God while willfully cherishing evil, they were destroyed. At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed “with the Spirit of His mouth,” and destroyed “with the brightness of His coming.” 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.

In the time of John the Baptist, Christ was about to appear as the revealer of the character of God. His very presence would make manifest to men their sin. Only as they were willing to be purged from sin could they enter into fellowship with Him. Only the pure in heart could abide in His presence. (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 107, 108)

Monday, January 30 — Monday’s lesson covers being *filled* with the Spirit. The importance of having the Holy Spirit is clearly stated by Paul in Romans 8:9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” God, through Paul, commands believers to be filled with the Spirit: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

The first person recorded in the New Testament that was filled with the Holy Spirit was Elisabeth (Luke 1:41). Her son, John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from her womb (Luke 1:15). After John was born and named, his father, Zacharias, was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:67).

The believers in the upper room were all filled with the Holy Spirit, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). After Pentecost, Peter

was again filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8), as was the company that he joined afterward (Acts 4:31).

Paul is mentioned as being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17; 13:9, 52).

In the case of Peter, what happened between the time of Acts 2 and Acts 4? Did Peter become unfilled and have to be refilled? The lesson notes that in Acts 13:52, the word *filled* “is in the imperfect tense, signifying continuous action. It literally means: ‘being [continuously] filled’” (*ASSBSG*, p. 40; brackets in original). But in no other case is the imperfect tense used. The verb forms are either future (Luke 1:15), past (aorist) (Acts 2:4), or present (Ephesians 5:8).

Perhaps understanding a principle of capacity will be helpful. Suppose we have collapsible cup. It can be opened to different sizes. Maybe we start by opening it to 500 ml. The cup can hold 500 ml of water. No matter how much I pour water into the cup, it can only hold 500 ml. But suppose I open the cup to its maximum capacity of 1,000 ml. Now I can pour more water in. In both examples the cup was filled, and no more could go in either but in the second case, its capacity to receive was greater.

When a person comes to Jesus, he or she may be filled with the Holy Spirit but as the person grows in Christ, the capacity to receive increases, and the person is able to have more of the Holy Spirit. A key factor in growth is daily making choices that build and develop character, so that growth can take place.

A simple key to understanding Christian growth is the dying of self. As self dies, good character develops. As self is displaced in the person, more room for the Spirit of God occurs. In the chapter “He Must Increase” in *The Desire of Ages*, we read these helpful thoughts:

The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the divine. As he witnessed to the Saviour’s glory, his words were almost a counterpart of those that Christ Himself had spoken in His interview with Nicodemus. John said, “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all.... For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.” Christ could say, “I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.” John 5:30. To Him it is declared, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.” Hebrews 1:9. The Father “giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.”

So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven’s light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character

of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.” Colossians 2:9, 10, R. V. (White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 180, 181)

A final note on Monday’s lesson: In the first paragraph the lesson states that “the apostle Paul uses the word *filling* to say that a person has submitted completely to God. . . .” (emphasis in original). It seems to us that the word should have been *filled*. In checking over thirty translations of the Bible, we could not find one reference to the word *filling* in relationship to the Spirit.

Tuesday, January 31 — This lesson is the first of two on conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit. One of the conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit is repentance.

Then Peter said unto them, *Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

The basic verb form of the word translated *repent* means to change your thinking. We are to cease thinking of sin and think, instead, of righteousness. We are told:

True repentance is more than sorrow for sin. It is a resolute turning away from evil. (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 557)

We must choose whom we will serve. We are told to have the “mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5), to think as he thought.

Wednesday, February 1 — This lesson deals with a very important condition of receiving the Holy Spirit. Peter said:

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (Acts 5:32)

The lesson rightly brings out that love and obedience go hand in hand. Paul says “faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6). The only way we can have obedience in our lives is by faith, and it works by love. Ellen White amplifies it this way: “Faith works by love, and purifies the soul from all selfishness” (*The Review and Herald*, March 17, 1910). She also notes:

But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience,

through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. (Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 100)

Thursday, February 2 — This lesson contrasts living for self and living for God. One who lives for self is, of course, self-centered, but he or she who lives for God lives a life of unselfishness.

The Bible says that we have all sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).

By nature the heart is evil, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Romans 8:7; Matthew 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172)

None of us can improve ourselves spiritually on our own. Jesus said, "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" (John 15:5). So although we are nothing of ourselves, if we link up with Jesus, the source of all strength, we "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" us (Philippians 4:13).

The lesson notes that "no mere external change, such as correcting this or that bad habit makes us Christians" (*ASSBSG*, p. 43). While this is true, we need to keep in mind the fact that our works have a great positive or negative influence upon our characters and, therefore, upon our salvation. Repeatedly in the Scriptures we are told to keep God's commandments, to do his commandments, to obey his voice, etc. When we obey God repeatedly, we are forming characters.

Never forget that thoughts work out actions. Repeated actions form habits, and habits form character. Then in giving attention to the little things, there is no fear that the larger things will become stained and corrupted. (Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look*, p. 89)

We must also never forget that while good works cannot save us, evil works will cause us to be lost!

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, *that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* (Galatians 5:19–21)

Lesson 6 — The Holy Spirit *and* Living a Holy Life

Sabbath, February 4 — This lesson begins with a discussion on *holiness*, which is dealt with more fully later in the lesson; however, in Sabbath afternoon’s section, there is continued confusion on the identity of God. We find this statement: “The Holy Spirit is intricately connected with our pursuit of holiness. After all, His name is Holy Spirit . . .” (*ASSBSG*, p. 46). The Holy Spirit’s name is Holy Spirit! This is not a truth of Scripture. Like the terms *father* and *son*, the expression *Holy Spirit* is expressive of a quality and not of a name. The Father has a personal name. Some believe it is Jehovah or Yahweh, but we know that the tetragrammaton (four-letters) contains his name. The Son has a personal name—Jesus. Some feel it should be Joshua or something similar, but we know he has a name. There is no name anywhere in God’s word for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is holy because it is the Spirit of God and since God is holy, his Spirit must be holy.

The lesson also notes, “His name [Holy Spirit] reminds us that God is holy and that it is God’s great desire to make sinners into the image of His own holiness” (*Ibid.*). But who is the “God” in this sentence? Is it the Father or is it the being called the Trinity? God is defined in the Seventh-day Adventist statement of fundamental beliefs as: “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons” (Fundamental #2).¹

Among many professed Christians, there is a lot of confusion upon the subject of the Trinity. This is no less pronounced in Adventism. Many Adventists believe that the Trinity is made up of three *beings*—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of these three beings is co-equal, co-eternal, and omnipotent. While there are *three*, they are said to be *one* because they are one in purpose. This concept is called Tritheism. The reality of such a teaching is polytheism,

1. This language is taken from the World Council of Churches and has its origin in the Catholic Council of Constantinople.

or many gods. This teaching is formally rejected by the leadership and rabbis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* is the official book that explains what the doctrines called the fundamentals mean. This volume was approved by the top leadership of the church. This book explains the second fundamental on the Trinity very differently than Tritheism.

While Tritheism says that there are three beings, the classical or orthodox trinitarian doctrine teaches that there is one being with three persons or three centers of intelligence.

In the being of God is an essential coprimordiality of three coequal, coeternal, nonoriginated persons. Moreover, Adventism conceives the idea of persons in its biblical sense, as referring to *three individual centers of intelligence and action* (Dederen 15). (*Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, p. 150)

The oneness of God plays a decisive, systematic role in determining the referent for the biblical revelations about God. In other words, since the God of the Bible is one and not many, all the various revelations about Him presented throughout the Bible refer to the same, one divine reality and *not to a plurality of divine beings*. (*Ibid.* p. 121)

In Tritheism you could, in theory, have one being removed without affecting the other two. However, in Trinitarianism this is not so. If you remove one of the persons, the whole being called God is no longer God. Concerning Tritheism, the *Handbook* states:

The *danger of Tritheism* involved in this position becomes real when the oneness of God is reduced to a mere unity conceived in analogy to a human society or a fellowship of action. Beyond such a unity of action, however, it is necessary to envision God as the *one single reality* which, in the very acts by which He reveals Himself directly in history, transcends the limits of our human reason (Prescott 17). (*Ibid.*, p. 150.)

Both Trinitarianism and Tritheism are contrary to the teaching of the Bible, where “The Father and the Son alone are to be exalted” (Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 7, 1898). The Bible does indeed present two divine beings, the Father and his only begotten Son. They are both alone worthy of worship and praise. The book of Revelation speaks of the throne of the Father and the throne of the Son, but there is no mention of a throne for the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit were a separate being like God and Christ, should there not be a throne?

Sunday, February 5 — The holiness of God is discussed on this page. It should be noted that in the New Testament the words *holy*, *holiness*, *saint*, *sanctified*, and *sanctification* all come from the same basic root word ἅγιος (*hagios*). *Hagios* means *holy* or *sacred*. Some reflections on *hagios* include:

1. The Holiness of God. On an OT basis, holiness is here seen to be God’s innermost nature (Rev. 4:8). (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged*, p. 16)

. . . pertaining to being holy in the sense of moral qualities . . . (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*, p. 744)

The word “saints” is *hagios* (ἅγιος), the verb *hagiazō* (ἁγιαζω), “to set apart for God, to consecrate.” Thus, a saint is a Christian, one set apart for God. (*Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, 1 Timothy 5:9)

God told Israel, “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 20:7). John writes that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and the essence of that love is holiness.

The lesson notes:

Holiness describes the purity and moral perfection of His nature. God’s holiness means that He is perfectly good and completely free from evil. . . .

God’s holiness means that He is separated from sin and entirely devoted to seeking the good that He represents in Himself. (*ASSBSG* p. 47)

This is a high and perfect standard, and we may quickly pass by it with the thought that God is perfect and perfectly holy, without giving consideration to how this includes us. But remember that *we are commanded* to be holy, using the same words that describe God’s holiness. When we are told to be holy, it is as God is holy, and that, beloved, is holy!

There is the thought in theological circles that, while in the flesh, humanity cannot overcome all sin and be truly holy and that *all sin until Jesus comes*. But this is wrong, and all teaching on God’s holiness must include his plan to uplift and empower man to be able to serve him in holiness. We are told to “give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2). And since God’s “biddings are enablings” (Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 333), it should be clear that God’s plan for each person is to clean up his or her life and be totally free from sin before Jesus comes.

Monday, February 6 — This lesson continues to discuss the nature of holiness. One very positive statement is simply, “Holiness, in one word, is

Christlikeness” (*ASSBSG*, p. 48; italics in original). But the reference also states:

In the New Testament, believers are called holy because of their unique relationships to Jesus that set them apart for a special purpose. Being holy does not make them ethically perfect and sinless . . . (*Ibid.*)

While we are all to grow in grace, we are also told:

And as God is perfect in His sphere, so we are to be perfect in ours. (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 574)

While the word *holy* can mean *set apart*, too many wish to seek a spiritual discount from God. What do we mean? Let us consider a parallel situation. Perhaps we go to buy a car. The seller offers a 3% discount off the price, but we counter offer to buy for a 5% discount off the price. Perhaps we settle in the middle for a 4% discount. Being good, sharp buyers, a discount is sought, the bigger the better. Sometimes we approach God and the issue of salvation in a similar manner. We want to know what kind of discount in righteous living we can have. Can we get a 10% discount that allows us maybe ten little sins a day? How much can we have off of righteousness? Jesus never made provision for discounts. He did not tell the woman caught in adultery, *Go, and sin only on Friday nights* or *Go, and taper off this sin*. No, he said, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Tuesday, February 7 — This lesson discusses the agent of sanctification and that without the Holy Spirit in our lives we cannot be sanctified and grow in our experience. This is, no doubt, true, but the approach of the lesson is pure relationship theology. All the effort is to simply keep our eyes upon Jesus and as we team up with him, we have no desire to sin. While there is a lot of truth in this, it is not complete. The Bible describes the need for the Christian to make choices and to actively resist evil.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:15)

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

Paul knew that his warfare against evil would not end so long as life should last. Ever he realized the need of putting a strict guard upon himself, that earthly desires might not overcome spiritual zeal. With all his power he continued to strive against natural inclinations. Ever he kept before him the ideal to be attained, and this ideal he strove to reach by willing obedience to the law of God. His words, his practices, his passions—all were brought under the control of the Spirit of God. (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp 314, 315)

The church militant is not the church triumphant. The church militant must wrestle and toil. She must strive against temptations and fight severe battles, because Satan is not dead. His agencies are much more active in his work than are the agencies of God in the work of their Leader. (Ellen G. White, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 22, 1901)

Wednesday, February 8 — This lesson rightly declares the law as God’s standard of all righteousness. Psalm 119:172 says, “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”

Righteousness is defined by the standard of God’s holy law, as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai. (Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, p. 274)

Only one comment will be made on the lesson for this day. The last paragraph states, in part:

While it is possible to keep the letter of the law without love, it is not possible to exhibit true love without keeping the law. (*ASSBSG*, p. 50)

The author does not define what he means by keeping the letter of the law, but we can agree with him if it means to have an outward appearance of keeping the law. God’s law cannot be truly kept in any form without love.

Thursday, February 9 — This lesson on pursuing holiness states what is called an old truth:

“Sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character.” And, we might add, “Character is destiny.” (*ASSBSG*, p. 51)

This or similar quotes have been attributed to many people, but we think that Ellen White said it best, when she noted:

Never forget that thoughts work out actions. Repeated actions form habits, and habits form character. (White, *The Upward Look*, p. 89)

While good habits form good character, we must also remember that bad thoughts will work into bad actions, and repeated bad actions will form bad habits and then bad characters, and nobody can enter heaven without a pure character. While good works cannot save us, our evil works will certainly cause us to be lost. After listing the works of the flesh, Paul notes:

I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:21)

Friday, February 10 — The confusion about God continues, especially in this lesson near the end of the first paragraph, where, after the quotation from Hebrews of the new covenant, we read:

We cannot be holy apart from obeying God’s law, and we obey His law only as He Himself, the Holy Spirit, writes His law in our hearts and minds. (*ASSBSG*, p. 52)

One great problem with this statement is that inspiration declares the law to be the product of the Father, not of the Holy Spirit.

Amid the awful glory of Sinai, Christ declared in the hearing of all the people *the ten precepts of His Father’s law*. It was He who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone. (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 366)

The claim that Christ by His death abolished *His Father’s law* is without foundation. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died to save man from the penalty of sin. The death of Christ, so far from abolishing the law, proves that it is immutable. The Son of God came to “magnify the law, and make it honorable.” Isaiah 42:21. He said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law;” “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” Matthew 5:17, 18. And concerning Himself He declares: “*I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.*” Psalm 40:8. (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 466)

The Father’s law is the Ten Commandments, and this is the law written in the heart of the believer, the same law that is written on hearts of flesh in the new covenant, instead of on stone in the old covenant. Thus, we can see that it is not the Holy Spirit’s law. The confusing statement of the Sabbath School lesson is sadly the result of a very flawed theology about God.

Lesson 7 — The Holy Spirit *and the Fruit of the Spirit*

Sabbath, February 11 — The Bible teaches the importance of having the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Galatians 5:22 speaks about the fruit (singular) of the Spirit, indicating that the work of the Holy Spirit does not result in several different virtues but, rather, in a life that is full of virtues that cannot be separated from one another. The Greek word translated *fruit* is καρπός (*karpos*) and is used, in various forms, in sixty-six verses of the New Testament and is always translated *fruit* or *fruits*, if in a plural form.

Sunday, February 12 — The only way one can bear fruit is to abide in Jesus. In John 15 Jesus declared that no branch (us) can bear fruit unless it is connected to the vine (Jesus).

When a person becomes a child of God by grace through faith, they are described as being *in Christ*. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

To abide in Christ is simply to keep or to maintain that relationship in a growing manner so it is a secure and a permanent relationship. It is trusting in Jesus for every need we have, and, as branches, we feed from the vine continually. Jesus explained the security of believers by noting:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. (John 10:28, 29)

Of course, one can quit abiding. This text does not mean that they lose the choice of abiding, but it does tell us that God’s love and power is so strong that nothing can put a wedge between the believer and God.

Abiding in Christ is not a unique or an exalted level of Christianity but, rather, is the normal experience for all believers.

The Bible gives evidences of how one abides in Christ, and one great evidence is obedience to God’s commandments:

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:10)

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:24)

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6)

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (1 John 3:6)

Since God's law is a transcript of his character or his image; as we abide in Christ, we reflect the character or image of the divine.

The only reliable proof of our abiding in Christ is to reflect his image. Just so far as we do this we give evidence that we are sanctified through the truth, for the truth is exemplified in our daily life. (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1895)

Furthermore, by the Spirit we have an awareness of a divine presence within us:

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. (1 John 4:13).

Monday, February 13 — This lesson is on the fruit of love. All aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are important, but love is listed first; and it is the essence of divinity, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The lesson states:

This love is far more than mere human affection. It cannot be produced by human effort. It comes as a result of abiding in Christ. (*ASSBSG*, p. 58)

While this is true, it can be amplified by noticing what John writes in his first epistle—“God is love” (1 John 4:8). John shortly thereafter notes that “we love him, because he first loved us” (v. 19), but how are we to know that God loves us? What evidence and motivation do we have that makes us want to love God? John has already told us!

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9, 10)

The doctrine of the Trinity that elevates the Holy Spirit to be a third person, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Son and distinct and separate from them, must, thereby, deny that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). When we deny Jesus is the begotten of God, however, we take away the very motive that God sets forth for why we should love him. This strikes a death blow to the plan of salvation. No wonder a teaching that denies the Son of God is called antichrist!

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

Tuesday, February 14 — This day’s lesson discusses the aspects of joy, peace, and patience, or longsuffering. To properly cover these three virtues in one day’s lesson would seem impossible but, to the author’s credit, he has done a reasonable job for the space allotted. The following statement, though, is a helpful supplemental thought:

With the consecrated worker for God, in whatever place he may be, the Holy Spirit abides. The words spoken to the disciples are spoken also to us. The Comforter is ours as well as theirs. The Spirit furnishes the strength that sustains striving, wrestling souls in every emergency, amidst the hatred of the world, and the realization of their own failures and mistakes. In sorrow and affliction, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone,—these are the times when, in answer to the prayer of faith, the Holy Spirit brings comfort to the heart. (White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51)

Wednesday, February 15 — This day’s lesson covers the virtues of *kindness*, *goodness*, and *faithfulness*. In the place of the King James Bible’s term of *gentleness*, the lesson uses *kindness*; and in the place of *faith*, *faithfulness* is used. The first is acceptable, within limits, but the latter alters the meaning of the text and is not acceptable.

The Greek word translated *faith* in the KJV is πίστις (*pistis*). This is the noun form of the verb root word πιστεω (*pisteuō*), which means *to have faith* or *to believe*. While *faithfulness*, in the sense of loyalty, might seem to fit the text, the trouble is that of the two hundred forty-four times *pistis* is used in the Bible (KJV), it is never translated *faithfulness*. It is translated *faith* in two hundred thirty-nine usages and *assurance*, *belief*, *believeth*, *fidelity*, and *believe*, each one time.

Faithfulness, or loyalty, is very important, and we certainly do not wish to diminish this virtue; but we find that the Greek of the text does not support the claim that *faithfulness* is a part of Galatians 5:22.

Thursday, February 16 — The virtues in this day’s lessons are *gentleness* (*meekness*: KJV) and *self-control* (*temperance*: KJV). While *gentleness* appears close in meaning to *meekness*, Jesus said that it was the meek who would be blessed (Matthew 5:5), though some translations (NASB, HCSB) translate the Greek word as *gentle*. *Meekness* has been described as power under control. The word *gentleness* loses this nuisance.

As noted in the lesson, *temperance*, or *self-control*, is “not only over food and drink but over every phase of life” (*ASSBSG*, p. 61).

Friday, February 17 — The largest paragraph in this day’s summary is a quotation from a Pentecostal source.

Lesson 8 — The Holy Spirit *and the Gifts of the Spirit*

Sabbath, February 18 — This lesson attempts to distinguish the difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, the latter having been discussed in the previous lesson. Simply put, the fruit of the Spirit is the out-working of Christian virtues in the believer’s life, while the gifts of the Spirit are special endowments given for the perfection of the saints, individually and collectively (the church), and for the work of the gospel.

Sunday, February 19 — This day’s lesson states in the first paragraph:

No one is required to manifest a gift of the Spirit, but everyone should manifest the fruit of the Spirit. (*Ibid.*, p. 65)

In a carefully read way, we might be able to agree with this statement about *manifesting* the gift, but the statement could easily be understood to mean that not everyone *has* a gift of the Spirit. What good, however, would a gift be, if it were not manifested or used? But Jesus, in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:15, indicates that everyone is given at least one talent. In the parable the word *talent* means something weighed out, such as money or a possession. This was to be symbolic of a gift or a talent of ability. We have also been told:

To every person is committed some peculiar gift or talent which is to be used to advance the Redeemer’s kingdom. All God’s responsible agents, from the lowliest and most obscure to those in high positions in the church, are entrusted with the Lord’s goods. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 618)

The lesson also notes that “there are many gifts, and some are greater than others” (*ASSBSG*, p. 65). Paul does set some gifts before others, as when he wrote “first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).² However, Paul also clearly teaches that when even the least gift is missing, it affects the whole body (church):

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. (1 Corinthians 12:21, 22)

2. Though Paul lists apostles before prophets, he also calls prophecy the best gift (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1).

Monday, February 20 — This lesson is entitled, “God, the Sovereign Giver of the Spiritual Gifts.” The lesson, on page 64, states:

This week we will study the Holy Spirit as the Sovereign Giver of God’s remarkable gifts . . . (*ASSBSG*, p. 64)

This creates confusion. On Sabbath’s lesson the Holy Spirit gives the gifts of God and in Monday’s lesson, God gives the gifts. Now if we assume that the Holy Spirit is a part of a triune God, this might flow, but what does the Bible say? Throughout the Bible, who is declared to be God? Paul writes

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Unlike the creeds that say that God is one person, Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit, the Bible says that the one God is the Father! This matches with John 17:3, where Christ is praying to the Father (John 17:1) and says:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The Bible nowhere says that the Holy Spirit, as a being apart from God or Christ, is God. The Spirit of Prophecy also notes:

“I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” Jesus came by the authority of God . . . (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 212)

Here Jesus says he came in the Father’s name, and then Ellen White notes that he came by the authority of God, meaning the Father.

One point before going to Tuesday’s lesson is that in 1 Corinthians 12:11 the pronoun *he* is used at the end of the verse to refer to the Holy Spirit. (The lesson quotes from the NASB.) It should be noted, however, that *he* is a supplied word in the verse. According to the structure a pronoun should be used, but the only noun that it can be referring to in the verse is πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), which is grammatically neuter in gender; therefore, the word supplied should be *it*. A trinitarian bias is the reason for this translation. While some demonstrative pronouns can be translated with gender, that is not the case here.

Tuesday, February 21 — We need to take a deep breath before we go to this lesson, which deals with the gifts of the Spirit. Incredibly, the lesson states:

The spiritual gifts were clearly given for service, not for our sanctification. . . . or as empowering us in our walk with God. (*ASSBSG*, p. 67)

But what does the Bible say? Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:** That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, **may grow up into him in all things**, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:8, 11–15)

These gifts teach the truth, and it is through the truth we are sanctified (John 17:17). D. T. Bourdeau wrote strongly on this, stating:

The above prophecies [Isaiah 3:3, 4; Joel 2:1, 15; Zephaniah 1:12–18; etc.] and other prophecies of the same import, not only prove that it is possible to overcome; but that the remnant church will really and actually overcome, that they will heed the many scriptures which make it obligatory for the church living in the last end of time to develop holy characters, that they may be found of the Lord without spot and blameless at his coming.

Yes, we may fully overcome and be wholly sanctified. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” 1 Thess. v, 24. He will sanctify you wholly, and preserve you blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Christ.” Phil. i, 6. God is faithful to accomplish that which he has promised, and supply our needs in sanctification. Do we need truth, present truth? This he gives under the proclamation of the last message of mercy. Do we need the Spirit’s aid? He is more willing to give the Spirit to them that ask, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. *Are the gifts of the Spirit needed “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?”* Eph. iv, 11–16. God himself has set these gifts in the church, 1 Cor. xii, 28, and vouchsafes them to those that believe, through the general commission of his Son to which all professing Christians fall back for authority to preach the gospel, believe and be baptized, Mark xvi, 17–20, and through the writings of the apostles and prophets. (D. T. Bourdeau, *Sanctification*, pp. 109, 110)

The lesson denies the great truth that part of the purpose of the gifts is to sanctify the believers. The rationale given for this is the philosophy that the gifts then become *Christian-centered* instead of *Christ-centered*. Yet the lesson admits that the gifts “are given to carry on the divinely commissioned ministry of the church” (*ASSBSG*, p. 67). So, under the logic used in the lesson, the gifts should then become *church-centered* instead of *Christ-centered*.

The confusion about God continues near the end of the lesson, where it states, “Thus, we might say that spiritual gifts are certain capacities given supernaturally by God through the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.*). But who is God according to the lesson? If the lesson is teaching the *orthodox* doctrine of the church, it is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! If we put this into the sentence it becomes senseless.

Wednesday, February 22 — This day’s lesson discusses the duration of the gifts. Were they just for apostolic times, as some claim, or do they continue past the times of the apostles? The lesson gives reasons for the need of the gifts and then states:

In the absence of any scriptural proof that God has abolished them, we have to *assume* that He intends them to remain until the church has completed its mission, and Christ has come again. (*Ibid.*, p. 68)

Why must we *assume* they are to remain? The Bible is plain that the gifts continue, especially the gift of prophecy, for Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 clearly declare that the gift of prophecy is a characteristic of the last-day remnant people! The manifestation of the Spirit in the life of Ellen White is proof of this truth.

Thursday, February 23 — This day’s lesson is on the gift of discernment, and one of the main themes is that “not everything that pretends to come from God is really from God” (*Ibid.*, p. 69). To this we heartily agree! All things are to be tried by the Scripture, and that which does not agree is to be discarded. In the Catholic Church it is customary to have an imprimatur stamped into books that teach official Catholic doctrine so that members may *know* what is safe to read. But this is surrendering one’s obligation to study to show oneself approved unto God as one rightly divides the word of truth. This practice of allowing others to make critical judgments for ourselves is very alive and well in professed Protestant churches. For some, just a publisher’s listing, such as Pacific Press, is enough to assure the reader that all inside such book is trustworthy. But this is wrong. We can never trust our souls to others, not to a pastor, a church, or any magazine, including *Old Paths*.

Friday, February 24 — Friday’s lesson contains a timely quotation from Ellen White that would be good for all to read and meditate upon.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

J. N. LOUGHBOROUGH

THE Spirit of God is spoken of in the Scriptures as God's representative—the power by which he works, the agency by which all things are upheld. This is clearly expressed by the psalmist, when he inquires: “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 139:7–10). We learn from this language that when we speak of the Spirit of God, we are really speaking of his presence and power.

While we may with profit consider what the Word says of that Spirit, and its manifestations to the children of men, it is emphatically true that “no finite mind can fully comprehend the existence, the power, the wisdom, or the works, of the Infinite One. Says the sacred writer: ‘Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.’ (Job 11:79).” [Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 116] The mightiest intellects of earth can not comprehend God. Men may be ever searching, ever learning, and still there is an infinity beyond.

“Yet the works of creation testify of God's power and greatness. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork’ (Ps. 19:1). Those who take the written word as their counselor will find in science an aid to understand God. ‘The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead’ (Rom. 1:20)” (White, *Ibid.*).

As expressed by another: “One reason so many who study science do not receive a knowledge of God, is that they are like a person coming upon a well-beaten road leading to a city, who takes the course leading from, the city instead of toward it. The farther he goes in that direction, the farther he gets from the city. So those who follow so-called ‘science’ without the aid of divine revelation, go deeper and deeper into the mist of speculation.” Not only is that the case, but not taking the revealed truths of the Bible as a guide, they are ever learning some new thing, which changes their former theories of what they called “scientific facts.” As an illustration of this, we note what Charles Lyell, the geologist, says: “In the year 1806 the French Institute enumerated no less than eighty geological theories which were hostile to the

Scriptures; but not one of these theories is held today” (*Townsend’s Ocean Beach Lectures of 1884*).

In further confirmation of the truth that the Spirit of God is recognized in the Bible as the Lord’s presence, we note the statement made by our Lord to the Samaritan woman: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and, in truth” (John 4:24). In harmony with this we see that the Scripture writers speak of the varied ways of the work of the Spirit as what the Lord “said” or did. David said, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). We have another illustration of this in the very first mention made in the Bible of the Spirit of God. It is found in the first chapter of Genesis, and reads as follows: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1, 2). Hebrew scholars tell us that the Hebrew word rendered “moved” in this text is really “brooded over,” and they illustrate its meaning by reference to the brooding of fowls over eggs to hatch their young. As here used, the word refers to the creative energy of God, which was made manifest in the creation of light, the separation of the sea and land, and the production of fishes, etc., from the waters.

In the study of the work of the Spirit, we find that three terms are employed in the Old Testament to designate it. These are “the Spirit of God,” the “Spirit of the Lord,” and the “Holy Spirit.” The first expression occurs about twenty-five times, the second about thirteen times, and the third three times. In many of these instances the use of these terms is expressive of the manifestation of God’s power, as in Micah, where the prophet says, “I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord” (Micah 3:8). The term “Holy Spirit,” which occurs three times in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10, 11), is used four times in the New Testament (Luke 11: 13; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thess. 4:8). We do not find the term “Holy Ghost” in the Old Testament, but it is found in the New Testament eighty-eight times. It means the same as the term “Holy Spirit” and is so translated in the Revised Version. Twice in the New Testament (Rom. 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11) the Spirit is spoken of as the “Spirit of Christ.”

When conversing with the Jews, our Saviour said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). This unity of the Father and the Son he made still plainer when he said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:10, 11). So also the Spirit is spoken of as the “Spirit of God,” or the “Spirit of Christ,” meaning the same, as the Spirit is alike the representative of both the Father and

the Son. That this term is used with reference to the work of either the Father or the Son will appear from a comparison of two texts in Peter's writings. Speaking of the ancient prophets, he said, "The Spirit of Christ which was in them" (1 Peter 1:11). He further says of them, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21), showing that the "Spirit of God" which controlled those prophets of old was the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost.

Of the oneness of the Spirit, we read still further in Paul's writings: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). And again: "For through him [Christ] we both [both Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). In writing to the Corinthians, he said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

So it is through that one Spirit that this promise of Christ is fulfilled to believers: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14 : 23). And why do we not all claim and share this benefit? It is surely our exalted privilege thus to do, for the apostle inquires: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. 3:16)? And again: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:18-22). As we are builded together for the express purpose of receiving that one Spirit, why not yield ourselves fully to God, and heed the request made to us in the *REVIEW* from week to week, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"?

To show the willingness of our Heavenly Father to grant this Spirit, our Saviour inquires of us: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13)? God is willing to give the Spirit. It "awaits our demand and reception." It is therefore for us to heed the entreaty; it is for us to "choose to obey" God, and by renouncing evil, to open the door of our hearts and let the Saviour in. Shall we not thus do, and share more and more of the supping with Christ? The Lord help us so to do.

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