



Abide in Jesus

*Jesus Christ:
"Abide in me, and I in you."*

HELMUT HAUBEIL

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For details, see page 2

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*Jesus Christ:
"Abide in me, and I in you."*

HELMUT HAUBEIL

The Path to Complete Joy
ABIDE IN JESUS

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” Abiding in Christ means

- ▶ a constant receiving of His Spirit,
- ▶ a life of unreserved surrender to His service.

E.G. White

Desire of Ages, DA 676.2

Abiding in Him is not a work that we have to do as a condition in order to enjoy His salvation. Rather it is our consent to let Him do everything for us, in us, and through us. It is a work He does for us – the result and the power of His redeeming love. Our part is simply to yield, to trust, and to wait for Him to accomplish what He has promised.

Andrew Murray

quoted in Dennis Smith, “40 Days” (Book 2) – *Prayers and Devotions to Revive Your Experience with God*, (R&H 2011), p. 35, Day 11.

These are lessons for further development on the topic in the booklet: “Steps to Personal Revival”.

We recommend reading this brochure again, even though the basic principles have been repeated here.

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JESUS' MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

What did Jesus teach about the Holy Ghost?

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Why do we need external help with character change?*

Back to our “first love”: A sister wrote to me: My friend and I are currently studying the “40 Days” book for the third time alternating with the booklet “Steps to Personal Revival”. Before we discovered this material our faith experience and prayer life wasn’t what it once had been. **We longed to find our “first love” again.** We have found it! We thank God with our whole hearts. It is so wonderful how our loving God answers prayers and that He reveals how His Spirit is working – on us and on the people we are praying for. M.S.

Jesus entered our lives: Another person wrote about these books: “... they have become a great and long-awaited blessing in my life. Just like many other church members and a sister from our church have experienced, something was always missing in our faith experience and now we have had the privilege of experiencing how **Jesus has entered our lives** and has begun to change us. He is still working on us and step by step is drawing us closer to Him.” S.K.

JESUS' SPECIAL APPEAL: ASK FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a particular Bible passage in which Jesus emphatically commands us to ask for the Holy Ghost. I know of no other passage where Jesus so lovingly urged us to take something to heart. These verses are found in His lesson on prayer in Luke 11. There He emphasized 10 times that we should ask for the Holy Spirit. Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV):

*“So I say to you, **ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son **asks** for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he **asks** for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he **asks** for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who **ask** Him!”*

In these few verses Jesus used the verb “ask” six times; then he replaced “ask” and emphasized it with “seek” two times – an action – and two more times with “knock” – also an action word.

Doesn't He clearly show us that we have to take action in order to be filled with the Holy Ghost? The last “ask” is used in the continuous tense in Greek. That means that we aren't to ask only once, but rather to ask continuously. Here Jesus doesn't only make asking a matter of urgency but also expects us to continually do it. Certainly He also wants to awaken our desire for the Holy Spirit with this heartfelt invitation. This urgent invitation shows us Jesus' conviction that we would be missing something crucial, if we don't continually ask for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. He was clearly calling our attention to the fact that we absolutely need the Holy Spirit. In this way He wants us to continually receive the rich blessings of the Holy Ghost.

This part of His lesson on prayer is a unique process. The Holy Spirit is God's greatest gift – the gift which brings all the other gifts with it. This was Jesus crowning gift to His disciples and clear proof of His love. I think we can understand that such a valuable gift wouldn't be pushed on someone. It is only given to those who express their desire for this gift and appreciate it. I have made it a habit to ask daily for the Holy Ghost in connection with John 7:37: *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”* (NKJV)¹

¹ It is very valuable to pray with promises. Please look at “Steps to Personal Revival”, Chapter 5

The Holy Ghost is the Source of a Fulfilled Life

According to Jesus why did He come to this earth? He said: *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10 NKJV)

Jesus wants us to experience this new life now and to continue it in a completely different dimension after His second coming as eternal life in God's kingdom.

He also shows us that the source of a fulfilled life is the Holy Ghost: *“...If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit...”* (John 7:37-39 NKJV)

“Rivers of living water” – isn't that a good comparison for a fulfilled life?

During His life here on earth did Jesus give us a corresponding example?

We know that Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 1:18). We know that after His baptism He prayed: *“And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him...”* (Luke 3:22) Under these circumstances was it necessary and important that He receive the Holy Spirit daily? I quote from E.G. White:

*“Morning by morning he communicated with his Father in heaven, receiving from him daily a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit.”*²

Jesus indeed was an example to us in this. We have to ask ourselves: If Jesus daily needed a refreshing from the Holy Ghost, then how much more important is it for you and me?

The apostle Paul really understood Jesus' concern. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul confirms in chapter 1:13 that they had been sealed by the Holy Ghost when they became believers. In chapter 3:16-17 he encourages them to be strong in the Spirit and in chapter 5:18 Paul, as an authorized apostle, calls the Ephesians and us to: *“...be filled with the Spirit.”* (NKJV) or *“let yourselves be continuously and repeatedly filled again with the Spirit.”*³ We see that this is an essential daily experience. It is important for the spiritual life and growth of a Christian to be daily filled with the Holy Ghost.

² White, E.G. *Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1895, par. 3

³ Pub.. Werner E. Lange, *Unser größtes Bedürfnis* (Lüneburg, 2011), p. 42.

In Christ's Object Lessons it says: "God does not say, Ask once, and you shall receive. He bids us ask. Unwearyingly persist in prayer. The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude, and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks".⁴

Our Sabbath School Study Guide says: The baptism with the Holy Spirit means being completely under the influence of the Holy Ghost – to be completely 'filled' by Him. This isn't a one-time experience, but rather something that has to be continually repeated, as Paul illustrates in Eph. 5:18b with the tense of the Greek verb 'filled'.⁵

Jesus' Farewell Words and the Holy Spirit

In Jesus' farewell words He conveyed joy and hope by telling them that the Holy Ghost would come in His place. He presented the functions of the Holy Spirit in John 16:7-14 (NKJV):

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

A New Advantageous Solution

Jesus told the disciples something surprising: "It is to your advantage that I go away." This means that the new solution, that He is with us through the Holy Ghost, is more advantageous than Jesus being personally present. In this way, He isn't limited, but rather He can be by each person, no matter where He currently is.

⁴ E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), p. 145:3

⁵ Sabbath School Study Guide July 17, 2014



Leading from Unbelief and Doubt to Faith in Jesus

The Holy Ghost has the task of opening the world's eyes. And isn't the world in the church to a certain extent? The Holy Spirit opens the world's eyes. He is the only one that can open the eyes of Laodicea. He awakens a desire for God in worldly people and a desire for a close relationship with Jesus in lukewarm Christians. Because He shows us the sin that is the cause of all other sins: "*because they do not believe in Me.*" Do you believe in Jesus? The core of faith is trust. The sign that we really believe and trust Jesus is when we completely commit ourselves to Him. It is a matter of complete commitment, of our willingness to follow Him in everything.

Saved and Justified through Faith

He also opens our eyes to Jesus' righteousness. When Jesus ascended into heaven His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. Thus the impossible became possible, namely that God exercised love and at the same time was just. The Holy Ghost wants to open our eyes to this invaluable exchange: Jesus takes on all the guilt from those who have entrusted themselves to Him and gives them His righteousness. It has to do with the central teaching of the Bible: righteousness by faith.

The Holy Ghost shows us God's Alternative

The Holy Spirit also opens our eyes to the fact that the *prince of this world* is already condemned. Satan has been cast out of heaven. His final end is imminent. When we are in Christ, then he basically can't harm us, even though we repeatedly fall into temptation and can become weak here on this earth. In 1 John 5:18 (NKJV) it says: „*We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*” A change of lordship has taken place in our life. Jesus wants to save us from sin and protect us from Satan's attacks. (For more particulars see the footnote.)⁶

On the other hand, the Holy Ghost also wants to open people's eyes to the fact that the judgment is coming. No one can escape this judgment, unless he has accepted the gift of salvation. It's definitely not

⁶ This important topic is dealt with in chapter 4 of Dennis Smith's book *40 Days* volume 2 "Prayers and Devotions to Revive your experience with God".

God's intention to make people believe through fear by pointing out the judgment. However, the knowledge that a judgment is coming can be a stimulus to repentance for many people. It would be unfair if we didn't show people the alternatives to what is coming. These are decision aids for us.

Gives us Understanding about the Truth

The Holy Spirit will lead us in all truth. He frees us from false perceptions, from errors and allurements. Yes, He also leads us into truth about ourselves, so that we can, with God's help, correct our course wherever necessary.

"The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood."⁷

Opens our Understanding of the Future

The Holy Ghost has the task of proclaiming future things to us. Jesus Himself spoke clearly about the future in Matthew 24 for example. But the Holy Spirit has the task of giving us even more light about the future. When we give Him room, then He can also open prophecy for us. And isn't it amazing that all seven of the letters in Revelation 2 and 3 close with the same challenge from Jesus: "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church.*" (Rev. 2:7 NKJV) Jesus also directs this call to us, the church of the last days, to listen to the Spirit. Are we really doing that?

Makes Jesus more Valuable to us

The Holy Ghost exalts Jesus. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus will become more precious and greater to us. A much greater appreciation for Jesus will develop in us.

⁷ White, E. G. *The Desire of Ages* (1898) p. 671.1

Power through the Holy Ghost

Jesus referred to the work of the Holy Ghost in His closing speech. In His farewell He added: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8 NKJV) Another task of the Holy Spirit is to give us power so that we can be witnesses for Him.

*“Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”*⁸

Power is also necessary for health education. Don Mackintosh, director of the New Start Program in Weimar, USA says: *“What we need is information about health in connection with the power to put it into practice. It has to do with the power to change.”*⁹ Here it has to do with the power of the gospel, more precisely the power of the Holy Spirit. We can only show others the way, when we are traversing the path ourselves.

We could mention further valuable blessings from the Holy Ghost. One thing is for sure though: God’s rich blessing is waiting for us.

Putting into Practice the Elements of a Revival

We have already been praying some time for a revival. It’s not only a question of praying for a revival, but rather as Mark Finley says it is also *“...as we put into practice the biblical elements of revival.”*¹⁰

A revival in the church depends on a revival of each individual. Hence may I appeal to you to take the steps for personal revival? This leads to a more powerful and fulfilled life, to a real and joyful life of faith.

Why is a new heart necessary?

Jesus said to the foolish virgins: “I know you not.” That is why they weren’t let in to the wedding, in other words in God’s kingdom. The reason was a lack of oil. It had to do with a deficiency in their spiritual life. The term “foolish virgins” describes the character of those people, **who**

have not experienced a sincere change of heart through the working of the Holy Spirit. We have a sinful nature. Thus we are all egoists, but we suffer from this egotism. Since no egoists will enter God’s kingdom a change of character is absolutely necessary. God’s Word shows us that everyone may come to Jesus as he is. But we also know that no one will remain as he is.

Notice that the foolish virgins don’t know God because they haven’t committed their lives to the working of the Holy Ghost.

*“Our salvation doesn’t depend on what we know, but rather on who we know... (John 17:3) What we know is important, but without a saving personal relationship with Jesus we are tempted and in the end lost. An understanding about God isn’t the same as an intimate, heartfelt familiarity.”*¹¹

This is definitely an important reason why Jesus urgently calls us to ask continually for the Holy Ghost. Do you pray daily in complete surrender and ask by faith for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost?

In the next section Jesus shows us important basic principles about the changing power of the Holy Ghost in our life.

JESUS ON THE HOLY GHOST IN THE PARABLE ABOUT THE LEAVEN

In this parable Jesus speaks about the changing power of the Holy Spirit. When you first read the parable, you don’t even think it could have something to do with the Holy Ghost. We can read the parable about the leaven in Luke 13:20-21 (NKJV):

“And again He said, “To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

Leaven is used in baking different kinds of bread. When it is added to flour, it starts a fermentation process, which makes the dough softer and lighter. In this way it is made more enjoyable to human taste.

Jesus wants to make certain principles of God’s kingdom clear to us through this illustration. In this parable it has to do with a marvelous process, which starts very small, but then has an astonishing end, as it says: *“till it was all leavened.”* Jesus wants to create His selfless love in us in place of our egotism.

⁸ White, E. G. *The Desire of Ages* (1898) p.671.2

⁹ David Fiedler, *D’Sozo* (Remnant Publications), Forward

¹⁰ Mark Finley, *Revive us again*, p. 26

¹¹ D. Smith, *40 Tage – Vertiefung deiner Gottesbeziehung, (40 Days: Prayers and Devotions to Revive Your Experience with God)*, (Wien, 2013), p.112

On one hand, I think Jesus wants to show the influence of the gospel on the world. Even though the gospel started out small it will permeate the whole world in the end.

On the other hand, Jesus is showing us how God's changing power works in us through the Holy Ghost. He says in Luke 17:20-21 (NIV):

*"The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because **the kingdom of God is in your midst.**"*

Back then the kingdom of God was in their midst through the person of Jesus. The kingdom of God begins in our lives when we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord. When we remain in Him and He remains in us, then at Jesus' second coming the visible kingdom will begin for us. At the moment, we want to look at the development of the kingdom of God in us by the indwelling of Jesus and Jesus can only live in us through the Holy Spirit. Here are important lessons from the parable:

The Changing Power Works Quietly

The leaven *"is used to represent the kingdom of heaven. It illustrates the quickening, assimilating power of the grace of God."*¹² "The change can be made only by the Holy Spirit."¹³ Here it has to do with an inner power that pervades everything and can completely change us. In this way God wants to positively change our character through the Holy Ghost.

The Bible shows us that the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost can be sometimes accompanied by audible and visible factors. But character change happens quietly – provided that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Till we suddenly discover that a positive change has taken place in us.

E. G. White: *"The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up – the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified.*

¹² E.G. White *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), p. 95.3

¹³ E.G. White *Christ's Object Lesson* (1900), p. 96.2

*The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God."*¹⁴

Why does God change us so quietly, so imperceptibly until we see the result? Is a quiet time necessary for change just as nature has when it revives from winter? Strong plants, e.g. oaks, usually grow very slowly. Does God test us in this way to see if we really have a desire for the Holy Ghost? Does He test our faith?

The power that changes our character comes from outside – it is not within us.

First, we have to realize: *"But man cannot transform himself by the exercise of his will. He possesses no power by which this change can be effected. The leaven – **something wholly from without** – must be put into the meal before the desired change can be wrought in it."*¹⁵ This is a very vital point. Jesus shows us here that we need a power that comes from outside of us for character change. Shouldn't we consider Jesus words about such an important issue: *„for without Me you can do nothing."* (NKJV John 15:5)?!

This important advice from Jesus is completely opposite of what is usually taught today. Whether humanism or esotericism, human philosophy or some areas of education, it is emphasized that the power for us to develop is in ourselves. It only has to be awakened by this or that method. "Self-realization" is also often talked about. The apostle Paul said about himself and it applies to us all: *"For I know that in me... nothing good dwells."* (NKJV Rom. 7:18) Under these conditions what would be the result of self-realization? We can read about it in 2 Tim. 3:1 (NKJV): *"There will be terrible times in the last days."* Egoism will reign. For us it doesn't have to do with self-realization, but rather with Christ-realization. The main thing is that the Holy Ghost lives in us and changes us positively.

Someone wrote: "When I studied the wonderful booklet *Steps to Personal Revival*, I started to daily ask Jesus for the constant presence of the Holy Ghost. ...it is simply overwhelming. My personal mindset has become much closer to Jesus and I have found self-worth in Him..."

¹⁴ E.G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900) p. 98.3

¹⁵ E.G. White *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900) p. 96.2

We of ourselves don't have any power to change our character. It has to come from outside. That is why Jesus so clearly called our attention in Luke 11: 9-13 to the fact that we should ask for the Holy Ghost, in fact we should continually ask for the Holy Spirit. During Jesus time here on this earth He was daily refilled with the Holy Ghost. For us it is even more essential. When I think of what God wants to daily give us through the Holy Ghost, then I think that our wonderful God wants to hug us every morning. Just like a married couple hugs each other every morning.

E.G. White says about this parable: *"All the culture and education which the world can give will fail of making a degraded child of sin a child of heaven. The renewing energy must come from God. The change can be made only by the Holy Spirit. All who would be saved, high or low, rich or poor, must submit to the working of this power."*¹⁶

Sir Winston Churchill, prime minister in Great Britain during World War II, is supposed to have said: We have gained control of everything with one exception: people. He's right. People cannot be radically changed by human influence alone. For this to happen, a power from out of this world is necessary. It has to do with the power of God, which can only effectively work in us through the Holy Ghost.

Let's summarize: The changing power for our character has to be received from outside ourselves. Since God's word tells us that inward man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16) it is very important to daily – best first thing in the morning – ask in faith for the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost begins His work in our hearts and then works outwards.

The next important lesson, which Jesus taught in the parable about the leaven, is the following. I'm quoting from Christ's Object Lessons:

"As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart."

¹⁶ White, E.G. *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900) p. 96.2

*"A profession of faith and the possession of truth in the soul are two different things. The mere knowledge of truth is not enough. We may possess this, but the tenor of our thoughts may not be changed. The heart must be converted and sanctified. The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely – because he is required to do so – will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within."*¹⁷

Ralph Luther comments: *"Jesus vigorously objected to acknowledging faith that is a mere inner religious attitude, which leaves practical life unchanged at the root."*¹⁸

In *The Desire of Ages* we read: *"The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church."*¹⁹

We want to summarize the valuable lessons Jesus taught about the Holy Ghost:

- ▶ The changing power of the Holy Ghost works in us imperceptibly. We often just notice the results.
- ▶ The changing power in our life has to come from outside of ourselves.
- ▶ The changing power starts in our hearts and then works outwards.

I strongly recommend that you read the chapter on the parable of the leaven in the book *Christ's Object Lessons*. It was very helpful to me.

¹⁷ White, E.G. *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900) p.97.1-3

¹⁸ Ralph Luther p. 71f, zitiert in O.S.von Bibra, *Der Name Jesus* (Wuppertal, 1964), p. 98

¹⁹ White, E. G. *The Desire of Ages* (1898) p. 805.3

Jesus last words: Listen to the Holy Ghost

Do you know what the last words are that Jesus spoke from His glory in heaven to the end time church? *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* (NKJV Rev. 3:22) Jesus calls each of us to listen to the Holy Spirit and that is what we want to do.

Change me!?

Can Jesus really change me? Let's take a beautiful painting as an example. Its value doesn't come from the quality of material used. Only a little paint, sometimes even of low quality, in the hand of an expert can be transformed into a valuable painting. We have a sinful nature. It is only important that this “material” is being worked on by a great artist. Jesus wants to do this and He is able to do it. He can form you and me into something that honors Him. Completely commit yourself daily into His hands and ask in faith for the Holy Spirit. You will be amazed at what He can do for you, in you and through you.

A personal testimony from a teacher and one of her students:

When the booklet “Steps to Personal Revival” from H. Haubeil was handed out in my home church about a year ago, I read it through very quickly. Already while reading it I had more experiences with God than ever before – this fascinated and encouraged me.

In the booklet's appendix I found the following suggestion: “Pedagogical research has shown that it is necessary to read or listen six to ten times to a vital topic till we can thoroughly understand it.”

These encouraging words captivated my attention: “Try it at least once. The result will convince you.”

I wanted to experience that and already by the third reading it overcame me and I felt a great love for our Redeemer, which I had yearned for my whole life. Within two months I had read it through six times and the result was worth it.

It was as if I could understand what it would be like when Jesus comes close to us and we can look into His pure, kind and loving eyes. From then on I didn't want to be without this joy in our Savior.

When I woke up in the morning I already yearned for my morning worship time in order to again experience fellowship with God and during the day I prayed quietly that the Holy Ghost would help me

with my thoughts during conversations, my example, while teaching and communicating.

When a child craved attention and acted accordingly, God gave me strength and wisdom to deal with it. Since then my work days are filled with the presence of the Creator. He helps me literally in my everyday life. Since then I pray in the morning and in between times for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It is as if you are closer to heaven and can already taste what it will be like there.

While reading the booklet the thought came to me that my students in the school should also share in this experience. I teach 10-15 year-olds in our Adventist School Elijah in Vorarlberg, Austria. So I prayed for God to give me opportunities. Very soon afterwards I had one of my most wonderful experiences with how the Holy Ghost can work in young people's hearts.

A 13 year-old Ruffian and the Holy Spirit

The experience started *a year before I read the booklet on the Holy Ghost*. A new student came to our school and within a few days our peaceful oasis was changed into a rough scuffle room. The boy was 13 years-old then – he was the biggest of all the children and correspondingly strong. Many things that had been learned during the school year and had brought wonderful fruit seemed to disappear in a moment.

Let him tell about it himself: “When I came to my present school, I had no idea what awaited me. On my second day of school I let myself get provoked, snapped and started a fight with one my classmates. I hit him even though he was considerably weaker than I was, berated him and never wanted to see him again.

Later I realized my mistake and apologized, just as I always had in the past. After that I had a conversation with the headmaster. In the next months a process started in me. It is astonishing that this process had only now started since I was a pastor's son. I started to spend more time with Jesus.”

I thought that this young person would need extra special attention. He was aware of his failure, regretted it and tried again, but he didn't have long-lasting success in his own strength. At first, hardly a day would go by when he wasn't in a fight, but gradually it got better.

After 6 months he said he thought it was the prayers that had brought him closer to God. In the meantime he had started praying

for strength in the morning. His fits of rage and fights became less frequent.

Eleven months had now gone by since he came to our school and we could see even more improvements. But his anger, his swearing outbursts and his fists weren't permanently under control.

It was only natural – he tried to win in his own strength and understanding, which worked sometimes and other times not at all. *Our prayers had made some achievement, but his mindset still wasn't right and the renewing power of the Spirit was missing.*

What good does it do, when a person sees their mistakes, tries to control their temper and in the next moment fails again? Just at the time when I realized that I was at my wits' end, I received the booklet mentioned above. It came at just the right time. Then I realized what we were missing. It was the power of the Holy Ghost. We hadn't even asked Him to help us!

Since I had been touched by the message of "Steps to Personal Revival" I got up my courage to ask the boy if he had ever prayed for the Holy Ghost. No – he never had. Then I tried to awaken his interest in the booklet. I didn't give it to him though. He should really want it. And very soon he did ask for the booklet.

Again in his own words: "In November 2012 my teacher gave me the booklet "Steps to Personal Revival". I eagerly started to read it. At that time I wasn't really acquainted with the work of the Holy Ghost."

Within the first day he had already devoured almost two chapters and then he asked me how many times I had read it. He immediately started to read the chapters again and wanted to do exactly what the booklet suggested: reading it 6-10 times.

Since then a lot has changed. From December 2012 on there weren't any more fist fights or scuffles – I could hardly believe it. The boys that he had beaten up every day became his friends and they get along harmoniously.

He has completely changed – he is polite and even obliging and peacefulness has taken over his aggressive nature. His classmates can confirm that God was at work. He is letting God work in him. You can see the fruits every day. To God's glory I want to mention that the boy decided to get baptized in June 2013. If that wasn't the Holy Ghost....

I had always thought that I could manage a child and make it see reason. Patience, attention and lots of talks would do it, but it just didn't

work long-term. God had to intervene and taught me that it is His Spirit, who makes the impossible possible.

Someday when this boy is in heaven, then I will know that God brought it about. When I was at the end of my wisdom and finally understood that I couldn't guide him, then God started to radically work on him. It encourages me to see that there are no hopeless cases for God. C.P.

An old man sat on the London Bridge and was playing his violin. There were only a few coins in his hat. A man went past him, but then returned and said to the man: Give me your violin for a moment. He started to play so beautifully that more and more people stopped to listen. It even caused chaos in the traffic. The man's name was Niccolò Paganini, the famous violinist. It is your choice if you want to play first violin in your life or if you want to place your life in the hands of the great Master.

Prayer: Father in heaven, thank you for the invaluable gift of the Holy Ghost. Please forgive me for neglecting the Holy Spirit. From now on help me to give Him the highest regard. I ask you to lift my daily life to a new level. Please work on me so that I ask daily for the Holy Spirit. Jesus asked daily for the Holy Ghost. Please help me to follow His example.

SURRENDER TO JESUS

What does surrender mean? Do I consequently lose my own will? Or will I become stronger? What can prevent us from surrendering ourselves to Jesus? What blessings are connected with my surrender? Is it sufficient to surrender my life one time?

*Full surrender is the key to salvation, to rebirth, to victory over sin and temptation, and to fullness of the Holy Spirit.*¹⁹

“Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest.”²⁰

The Holy Spirit is the coronation gift that Jesus gave to His disciples. God could not give more than this. The Holy Spirit is the gift that brings forth all other gifts. *“But like every other promise, it is given with conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet they receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies.”*

19 Garrie F. Williams, *How to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit and Know it*, German version, (Lüneburg, 2007) p 78)

20 Desire of Ages, p. 331.2

Receiving this gift is bound to conditions. We often speak about Christ and the Holy Spirit and still we do not receive any blessing. Why? **We do not completely surrender to Him**, so that we can be led and guided by Him. Many have not surrendered themselves to God – often out of ignorance – but rather have taken their lives into their own hands. – This can be the reason for a deficiency in the Holy Spirit. Hence this topic: surrender to Jesus.

Personal Testimony

I was a businessman, age 36, when a friend, who was a pastor, suddenly passed away. This brought the question to my mind: What would happen, if God called me to be a pastor? I did not want this at all. For a whole week, I fought a bitter fight. I negotiated with God in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Each time I explained to Him why I did not want to become a minister and what I could do instead. After a week, I had to admit that God apparently did not hear my objections. As I was kneeling at my bedside and didn't have any further arguments, a quiet thought came to my mind: **God loves you!** And I thought: Yes, I believe this.

After a few minutes, trust in God's love led me to completely **surrender** myself to the Lord. After that, I was at great peace. As a matter of fact, the Lord called me one and a half years later to be a pastor. Today I am still extremely grateful to Him. It was His endless love and wisdom that showed me a completely different way than the one I had in mind. In retrospect, I clearly see that this surrender released great blessings in my life. God led me the best way possible in my life.

A Personal Testimony

At the beginning of the year 2014 I kept asking myself: "Will Jesus say to me one day: 'I do not know you?' Am I one of the foolish virgins?" The thought of this was unbearable, since I wanted to receive eternal life from God, but due to various things in my life, I always had a guilty conscience and wasn't always quite on the right track. Fortunately, I came across two books – "Steps to Personal Revival" and "Abide in Jesus". After reading them the first time, I realized that something had to change in my life. I read the booklets several times in order to really understand everything. In addition, I heard a testimony from a devout

sister, who became a spiritual Christian just a few months ago. Now I know with certainty that at the beginning of the year that I was "carnal" and I would have died, since Jesus would have had to say: "I do not know you." Thank God for these books that showed me how to become a "spiritual" Christian.

Through complete surrender to Jesus, God was able to completely change my life in only one month. Now I get up at 4:30 a.m. to study God's word. In my own power, this would have been inconceivable – sleep was more important. I pray differently – Spirit-filled. I ask the Lord everyday what He wants me to do today. And God answers. I daily invite the Holy Ghost to live and work in my heart. I have clearer thoughts and dress more "womanly". Moreover, I don't eat constantly anymore. That was impossible for me in my own power. I can meet the daily demands much more peacefully and the stress doesn't make my stomach turn to knots. My husband also noticed changes in me after three weeks. He said: "You aren't as sharp-tongued anymore." When studying the Bible I suddenly had so many questions, which I had never experienced before. Now I want to dig deeper. Previously, the Holy Spirit had only occasionally led me to give a testimony. Now it happens daily. I don't have to "prepare a speech", God gives me the right words, because only He knows the person I am speaking with. Although I sin at times, God gives me clear awareness to see them. I can repent and change my ways.

I have come to realize that I can accomplish nothing without Jesus and that I need Christ's presence every step of the way. I have also realized that the opposite of pride (how good I am, how good I can do something) is humility, which clearly shows us that without Jesus we can do absolutely nothing good. God also gave me the strength to stop drinking coffee. Previously, this would have been unthinkable, because when I quit drinking coffee I had horrible headaches for five days – these are severe withdrawal symptoms. This time I didn't even think about what the consequences would be for me. I only knew that I didn't want to do it anymore. Today, I have no more desire for it.

I had a similar experience with meat. My family and I never wanted to abstain from eating meat. Today it is easy for me – I have no more desire for it.

The turning point in my life was the great desire for eternal life and realizing that nothing else may be more important than my redeemer Christ Jesus. No matter the consequences for me.

What it says in Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NKJV) is true: Jesus will give us a new heart and a new spirit. Jesus wants to make us into people, who keep His commandments and do them. For decades, I had struggled with different problems, but in vain. I couldn't do it myself. Jesus wanted to accomplish it in me, He only needed my willingness.

Ellen White says: "Whoever tries to reach heaven with his own works by keeping the law, is trying an impossibility." This is exactly what I experienced for 35 years. Intellectually I agreed with the commandments, but I couldn't keep them. Only Jesus can accomplish good in me, He gives us the desire for good and healthy things and He removes our desire for harmful things.

Today I can confirm what it says in Romans 8:14 (NKJV): "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." According to this verse, I have to ask daily, hourly, constantly for the Holy Spirit to live and work in me – because the devil doesn't sleep.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:37 (NKJV): "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." I had always thought: That just doesn't work. Now I know that when Jesus lives in my heart, then the great God of the whole universe works in me and through me and He can take care of my children and family much better than I ever could. Only God is all-powerful and all-knowing and with confidence I can place my life in His hands every day, He will do everything right – according to His wisdom and His plan. M.M.

Surrender – why?

The term "surrender" is aptly explained in "Steps to Christ" by E.G. White:

"God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God." ²¹

²¹ E. G. White, The Desire of Ages, 672.1

Our surrender to God brings an immense blessing. God invites us to surrender ourselves to Him, because He **wants** to heal and free us. From what?

When Jesus is able to guide our lives, then He is able to free us from the tyranny of our self (envy, resentment, quarrelsomeness, greed, addiction, anger, pride, conceit, discouragement, inferiority complexes, etc.). Remember: Every human being is his or her own biggest problem. You are your biggest problem. Only God is capable of leading us to real freedom. But a potter can only work with the clay that is in his hands. That's what surrender is about.

This is how God wants to free us from the power of sin and give us divine guidance and protection.

"The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart." ²²

What does the Bible say about surrender?

Rom. 6:13: *"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God ... and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."* According to this text, surrender means to yield yourself to God and to place yourself at His disposal.

Hanna W. Smith, a Christian author, comments this text as follows: To surrender something means as much as to hand over something, to give something into the possession and administration of someone else. To surrender ourselves to the Lord means the same thing. Subsequently, the Lord has the power of control and ownership of us. This means renunciation of ourselves and surrender of our self. ²³

Rom. 12:1: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

What reason does this text give for surrendering our lives to God? "... the mercies of God." This shows us clearly: We have to surrender ourselves to the God of love.

²² E. G. White *My Life Today*, 6,6 egwwritings.org

²³ Hanna W. Smith: *Christsein täglich (To be a Christian daily)*, Asslar 1994, 38

Surrender means completely placing ourselves in God's hands, being at His disposal, giving our lives to Him as a sacrifice, not as an Old-Testament sacrifice that was burnt, but as a living sacrifice – that **lives for Him** from the moment of surrender.

When I look back at my life I can say: before my surrender it seemed to me that surrender was a sacrifice. Afterwards, I realized that it wasn't a sacrifice, but rather it was an infinite blessing.

Johannes Mager comments: "Surrender, abandonment, commitment, being entirely at God's disposal – these are serious, but uplifting terms. Surrender has nothing to do with emotions or moods. It means to **give ourselves to the One we love.**"²⁴

2 Corinthians 5:15 says what the result of surrender is: "... *and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised.*" **Surrender means living for Jesus.**

To live for Jesus does not merely mean serving Him fulltime, but rather: "*And everything, whatever ye may do in word or in deed, [do] all things in [the] name of [the] Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him.*" (Colossians 3:17)

Charles T. Studd said: "If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to bring to Him."²⁵ — This man practiced what he said. He was a top athlete in England. When he became a Christian he gave up his career, donated his millions to a missionary society and went to China as a missionary, later to India and finally to Africa. The missionary society he founded is still active with 1800 missionaries working worldwide. He surrendered his life to Jesus.

Jesus gave Himself for us and to us

An essential fact should not be overlooked. Surrender is not a one-sided affair. Jesus gave himself to us first. He gave us everything that God could give and He invites us to give everything that we can give. It is a matter of everything for everything. Only there is a world of difference between God's *everything* and my *everything*. However, nobody can give more than everything.

²⁴ Johannes Mager: *Unser größtes Bedürfnis (Our greatest need)*, Lüneburg 2011; Seite 47,48

²⁵ Norman B. Grubb: *Charles Studd – Kein Opfer zu groß (No Sacrifice is Too Great)*



Five levels of surrender

An author speaks about five levels of surrender:

- ▶ Giving money is the lowest level of surrender.
- ▶ Next is the surrender of time.
- ▶ Then comes the surrender of our power and skills, our service.
- ▶ After that the surrender of all my fears and hopes, which includes everything mentioned above.
- ▶ **The surrender of my whole being – which means completely surrendering my will and life to Jesus.**²⁶

This last point describes real surrender.

It's wonderful when we surrender ourselves to our heavenly Father, because we trust in His love and do not let things go so far as the prodigal son in Jesus' parable. He capitulated when he hit rock bottom in his life and only then did he decide to go back home. As he came close to his parents' house, his father came to meet him and wrapped his arms around him. He fully accepted him as his son. Only then did he clearly comprehend his father's love. This turned his capitulation into a surrender out of love.

A tragic incident

The following incident occurred in France and helps illustrate this:

The wife of a rich Frenchman confided a secret to someone. The lady carried a small bottle of poison in her hand. She was planning to take her life because of difficulties in her marriage. She said: "Just yesterday I complained to my husband; but he answered in surprise and bewilderment: 'What more do you want? You have my checkbook (meaning that she had his money at her disposal), you own my house, you eat at my table. Everything that prosperity and rank can offer you belongs to you, and yet you complain?' I told him", continued the lady, "I want your heart, I want you to love me". And he exclaimed: "You can't have that. You know that my heart belongs to another woman. Everything I own is yours, but my heart, my love, it is impossible for you to demand that from me."²⁷

No one, who loves someone, would be happy with such an answer. The woman didn't care how much her husband owned, but what did matter was him as a person.

"Our great Lord does not want something from me. He wants me. Jesus doesn't want part of my time or part of my assets, nor of my talents or abilities."²⁸ He wants me, because He loves me and wants to make me happy.

We ought to "surrender" ourselves, we ought to hand over our self with everything we have and are. We ought to surrender ourselves to the care, leadership, direction and will of God. This is our *reasonable* service that Rom. 12:1 calls us to.

When the word of God says about complete surrender that: "*This is your reasonable service*", then it can only mean that **surrender to God is the most reasonable thing we can do**. What is more reasonable than to put our case into the hands of a skillful physician, when we are sick? What is more reasonable than to entrust myself to an experienced guide when I am lost?

Compared with God I am poor, foolish, and helpless. Wouldn't it be sensible to place myself in God's hands? The point is to trust the One who created me, who wanted me to be, who loves me and who can care for all my needs. Through our surrender, God's infinite love and power are on our side. **Complete surrender is not a loss, but rather a huge asset. It's entering a life led by God.**

Our complete surrender is the beginning of a "*more abundant life*" (John 10:10) that Jesus wants to give us. And this surrender also clearly has to do with victory over evil as Rev. 12:11 affirms: "*And they overcame him (1) by the blood of the Lamb, and (2) by the word of their testimony; and (3) they loved not their lives unto death.*" This shows that complete surrender is necessary to overcome sin and Satan and that this is the best thing we can do.

In Christ's Object Lessons we read the following:

*"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God."*²⁹

²⁶ Dean M. Kelley: *How Adventism Can Stop Growing*, Ministry (February 1983), 4

²⁷ Oswald Smith: *The Man Whom God Will Use*, 26

²⁸ Johannes Mager: *Unser größtes Bedürfnis (Our greatest need)*, published by Werner E. Lange, Lüneburg 2011, Seite 48

²⁹ E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), page 331.2

“To Jesus, who (daily) emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling (and daily asks for the Holy Spirit).”³⁰

We see here that:

- ▶ The Holy Ghost lived in Jesus without measure.
- ▶ He desires for us to live in complete surrender so that the Holy Ghost can live in us to the same extent.
- ▶ For this reason Jesus gave the command: “Be filled with the Spirit.” In the original Greek text this means: “Let yourself be continually and repeatedly filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Eph. 5:18)
- ▶ His object is that we will have life more abundantly. (John 10:10, Col. 2:10)

What can prevent us from surrendering?

For me it was the concern about my job. To be precise, I was worried that after my surrender God would call me to be a pastor.

Edwin Orr encountered different obstacles. It was clear to him in his youth that “I had to surrender completely to the Lord ... For the first time in my life I realized that God was talking to me. The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. I told the Lord I was completely willing to surrender everything to Him. The voice in my heart asked: ‘What about your favorite sins?’ ... I confessed them and promised never to repeat them. The voice inside me continued: ‘What about your will?’ This came as a complete surprise to me... So I told the Lord: I’m ready to go wherever you want me to go or to remain at home ... Then the Spirit of God spoke to me about an idol I cherished in my life. It was a girl that I loved very much. The Lord asked me whether I would be willing to give up this girl if He asked me to. Suddenly I realized that my will put up a barricade at this point. I did not want to make such a sacrifice ... At this point the Holy Ghost stopped talking to me. All at once, my heart became alarmingly void. I soon realized this and then I again felt a longing to be filled with the Spirit. This time I surrendered myself completely to the Lord. I was ready to surrender even this part of my life to Him ... My heart was filled with indescribable love, joy, and power ... For the first time in

³⁰ E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896), page 20.3

my life I felt that I really knew my God and Savior and that Christianity was more than a doctrine or philosophy.” – God achieved great things through Edwin Orr’s life.³¹

In my case, the obstacle was my job, with Edwin Orr it was a girl. Whatever the case may be for you – if you have not yet completely surrendered yourself to the Lord, put yourself together with your problem into His hands. The Lord will greatly bless you.

Let us pray: Father, we thank You so much that You want us to surrender to You so that we may be blessed and can simplify our lives and live in a way that will let You make us into something new. Please help me to daily surrender my life to You without any restrictions and to follow You in all things by Your strength.

The Lord respects our decisions

Trust in God! If you were all-knowing, you would choose the same path, which God wants to lead you on. We can cast off every fear and reservation when we completely surrender to the God of infinite love. God will never act against the free will of a human being. Our wonderful God respects our personality. Freedom is one of our most precious gifts God has given us. That’s why God waits for our consent and acts only when we ask Him to. Freedom is a divine prerequisite. Love can only develop under freedom.

Does surrender to God mean that we have to give up our own will?

Do we completely lose our will when we surrender to God? Do we become puppets and God can control us by pulling the strings? Of course not! Why not?

Because by giving ourselves completely to God we substitute our foolish, misguided, ignorant and immature will for the perfect, magnificent and wise will of God. We are placing ourselves under divine navigation.

We should not give up our will, but rather **the wrong use of it**. The will, which should be given up, is the one that differs from the will of God. To be precise: It has to do with exercising our stubbornness.

³¹ J. Edwin Orr: *Volle Hingabe (Full Surrender)*, Kassel 1965, page 108ff., shortened

E. G. White says: “But one says, “Can I not have my own way, and act myself? – No, you cannot have your way, and enter the kingdom of heaven. No “my way” will be there. No human ways will find place in the kingdom of heaven. Our ways must be lost in God’s ways.”³² (See also Isaiah 53:6)

Whoever refuses to be guided by God and His word is living on the basis of his own limited mind instead of depending on “divine navigation”.

“When our will is in harmony with God’s will, it remains untouched; as a matter of fact it would be wrong to relinquish it.”³³

E. G. White even writes: “As **the will of man** co-operates with the will of God, it **becomes omnipotent**. Whatever is to be done at His command, may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.”³⁴

“When we let the Holy Spirit guide us, then we are not cramped or limited. Instead, we are living in maximum freedom. In 2 Cor. 3:17 we read: “... and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”³⁵

Life under divine navigation

Doesn’t Proverbs 3:5-6 contradict this? “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

Many think this means that they have to turn off their minds. Or put another way, to turn off their powers of reasoning. Nothing could be more wrong. God wants us to use our reason. He invites me to connect my reason with His infinite reason.

Didn’t God give Daniel and his friends, who were obedient with their whole hearts in small things as well as great things, tenfold greater intelligence? God wants us to maximize the whole potential of our minds and at the same time connect with His infinite mind.

It’s like driving a car with a navigation device. I have to use my whole reason to drive, but it is well-advised to trust the GPS about turns, speed limits, notification of traffic jams or detours, the best way to reach my destination or how long till I reach my destination, etc. I remember

³² E. G. White., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 23 February 1892

³³ H. W. Smith: *Christsein täglich (Being a Christian daily)*, 73

³⁴ E. G. White, *Christian Service* (1925), p. 258.6

³⁵ David Wolkwitz: *Der Weg zu einer kraftvollen Erweckung*, (NRW-Vereinigung), 25

well when I borrowed a navigation device, because I needed to attend a funeral in an unfamiliar part of Munich. The GPS did a superb job and I was able to reach my destination without any problems.

Rely on God, on His instructions, on His standards and councils and go your way under divine navigation.

Doubt about the instruments

During World War II a British aircraft started from Sicily and headed for North Africa. Since all the airports had blackouts, the pilots had to rely completely on their instruments. Although they hadn’t flown the calculated time yet, the instruments were showing that they had reached their destination. They thought this was impossible so they kept on flying. Not until they were far over the Sahara did they realize their mistake. They ran out of fuel and had to make an emergency landing in the desert. Since they did not have enough water on board, the whole crew ended up dying of thirst.

Later, when the aircraft was discovered, they found that all the instruments functioned properly. The aircraft had been in an airstream and thus reached its destination faster. However, the pilots trusted their own calculations more than their instruments, which was fatal for them. They made the wrong decision.³⁶ We can rely on God’s leadership. It is better to rely on God’s word than on our own assumptions.

People with backbone

Through our surrender to Jesus Christ, we do not become weak-willed; rather we will be people with a backbone, who defend their standpoint with wisdom and politeness. Think again about Daniel and his friends. As young people, they proved they had backbone and were loyal to God during the diet situation in chapter 1. Or think about their phenomenal decision in front of the fiery furnace, as mentioned in chapter 3, when they were already middle aged. And think about Daniel’s attitude as an old man when he was in front of the lion’s den, as mentioned in chapter 6.

³⁶ *Aller Diener*, 11/III (1983), 142

Self-esteem or esteem through Christ

Anyone who surrenders themselves to Christ doesn't have to worry about their self-esteem, because they have much greater esteem through Christ. In *The Ministry of Healing* we read: "Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no great object for which to live, no high standard to reach. One reason for this is the low estimate which they place upon themselves. Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves."³⁷ A sister shared after she had begun to live in the Holy Spirit: "I have found my self-esteem in Christ."

A prayer for the surrender of our will

A young man sought a counseling session with a minister, because he wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit and was struggling with it. The minister asked him: "Have you completely surrendered your will to God?" – "Not completely, I'm afraid." – "Well", answered the minister, "it is useless to pray (for the Holy Spirit) before you have completely surrendered your will to God. Don't you want to surrender it to the Lord right now?" – "I can't.", he replied. "Are you willing for God to do it for you?" – "Yes" was his answer. "Then ask the Lord now."

The young man prayed: "O Lord, empty me of my self-will. Bring me to a complete surrender to your will. Lay my will down for me. I ask in Jesus' name." Then the minister asked him: "Did it happen?" – "It must have", he replied, "I asked God for something according to His will and I know that my prayer was heard and that I have received what I asked for. (1 John 5:14-15) Yes, it happened, my will lies here." The minister continued: "Now ask God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit [to be filled with the Holy Spirit]. The young man prayed: "O Lord, baptize me now with the Holy Spirit. I ask in Jesus name." And it happened immediately after he had submitted his will to the Lord.³⁸

It is wonderful that our loving Father is even willing to create the prerequisites in us when we ask Him to.

³⁷ E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), p. 498:3

³⁸ R.A. Torrey, *Der Heilige Geist – Sein Wesen und Wirken*, (Frankfurt, 1966), 151 (The Holy Spirit – His Nature and Ministry)

We can learn two things from this prayer: (1) This young man was already acquainted with praying with promises. In his prayer, he relied on the promises of the Lord that prayers according to God's will, will be answered at the very moment they are spoken. (The wonderful way of praying with promises is explained in detail in the booklet "*Steps to Personal Revival*" by H. Haubeil.) (2) The young man decided to accept the help of God in surrendering himself.

Steering our life: Decisions

We should know that the ability to make free will decisions is the guiding authority in our lives. I want to give you an example in order to better explain the full meaning of this ability.

The hull of the passenger liner "Queen Elizabeth" weighs 1300 times more than her rudder. This means that the rudder is able to steer a bulk that is 1300 times bigger than itself. The rudder in our life is our ability to make decisions. If we decide to submit ourselves to the will of God, then He places all necessary assistance at our disposal.

Challenges

In the matter of surrendering ourselves to Christ, it has to do with our decision either if we want to live for ourselves or if we want to live for God. Everyone, but especially young people, have to ask themselves if their ego should control their lives or if they want to serve God.

Material goods and sensual pleasures can provide an illusion of happiness, but these things bring no real satisfaction – we always want more. The more he has, the more he wants, his complaints never stop, says a well-known German proverb. Finally, we realize that these things have taken possession of us.

A further challenge we have to take into consideration is the fact that other people with a certain amount of authority over our lives, for example our family, school, church, company or society, expect things from us that contradict God's expectations.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus, then we will have the power and courage to give God's expectations priority and be able to defend our standpoint with wisdom and politeness. (see Daniel 1)

Is it sufficient to surrender my life one time to God?

There is a fundamental surrender to Jesus Christ at our conversion. This surrender, which takes place in prayer and after appropriate biblical instruction and conviction, is sealed with baptism and is valid for all eternity. God's word calls this basic surrender to Jesus a covenant with God.

Daily surrender is something quite different. Since it is often also called dedication, conversion, or consecration this expression may cause some confusion. In order to make things clear I will call it consecration. The daily **consecration** (or surrender or conversion) means that today I want to live out the basic covenant I have made with God; I want to stand for the covenant today. That's why it is invaluable to pray daily: "Lord, I consecrate myself to you today with everything that I am and have."

If I remain in this covenant, then I need don't need to worry about anything. God is able to safeguard everything that is entrusted to Him. God always keeps His word. He will not file for divorce. The Bible compares our covenant with Christ as a marriage.

Morris Venden comments as follows: "Obviously, getting married doesn't mean much if you don't plan to stay married. And you can't stay married if you've never gotten married in the first place."³⁹

In order to retain the positive consequences of our fundamental surrender, it is necessary to abide in Jesus. That is why Jesus talks about "abiding" nine times in John 15, for example verses 5 and 7:15 "**He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.**"

Abundant life has to do with abiding in Jesus. Through fellowship with Him we are able to lead a fruitful life – a life of joy, power, victory and valuable abilities. God is able to do great things in our lives. When we are seized by this truth, it will revolutionize our lives.

Let us conclude these reflections on surrender to Jesus with a hymn that is actually a prayer:

1. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.
2. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.
3. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.
4. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.⁴⁰

*"Lord, I believe Thou hast died to redeem my soul. If Thou hast placed such a value upon the soul as to give Thy life for mine, I will respond. I give my life and all its possibilities, in all my weakness, into Thy keeping"*⁴¹

39 Morris Venden, *95 Theses on Righteousness by Faith*, p.133

40 Seventh Day Adventist Hymnal, *Have Thy Own Way, Lord*, words by Adelaide Pollard

41 E. G. White, *Faith and Works* (1979), p. 16.2

JESUS ABIDING IN YOU

Under what conditions can Jesus live in me?

*What effects does “Christ in me” have on my life?
The ultimate achievement: Being imbued with the
fullness of God*

E.G. White: “... religion means the abiding of Christ in the heart.”⁴¹

“It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.”⁴²

Note this:

1. Through the Holy Spirit Christ lives in us.
2. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith.
3. This is the beginning of eternal life.

The knowledge that Jesus wants to live in me through the Holy Spirit and actually does, when I am filled with the Holy Spirit—is very valuable to me. This is a wonderful biblical truth.

⁴¹ E. G. White: *Review & Herald*, May 24, 1892, par. 4

⁴² E. G. White: *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p. 388.1

Remain in Christ

Jesus not only wants to have intimate fellowship with us by living in us through the Holy Spirit, but He also desires consistency and a deepening of our relationship with God.

In John 15:4 He says: “*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.*” This is a wonderful invitation and at the same time a command. This means that a consistent Christian life is possible through God’s power.

Jesus emphasizes the term “abide” eleven times in this passage (John 15:1-17). He wants us to have a lasting relationship with Him.

Ellen White clarifies: “*Abiding in Christ means [first] a constant receiving of His Spirit, [and second] a life of unreserved surrender to His service.*”⁴³

*Elsewhere she says: “A connection with the divine agency every moment is essential to our progress. We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit.”*⁴⁴

And: “*He (Jesus) will live through them, giving them the inspiration of His sanctifying Spirit, imparting to the soul a vital transfusion of Himself.*”⁴⁵

We may see David’s prayer as a promise for ourselves: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*” (Psalm 51:12)

Drawing upon God’s Power Source

Many people do not know how to draw upon God’s power source. They live in spiritual poverty, although “*...his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...*” (2 Peter 1:3)

In Texas there is a famous oil field called Yates Pool. During the American economic crisis there was a sheep ranch there, owned by a man named Yates. However, he was not able to earn enough money with sheep farming to pay his debts. Then an oil company came and informed him that there might be an oil deposit on his property. The company proposed doing a trial drilling and so he signed a contract.

At about 1200 feet, they found a huge oil deposit. And it all belonged to Mr. Yates! On the day he had purchased the land, he had also received the right to any oil or any other natural resources. He was a multimillionaire living in poverty. What was the problem? He didn’t know about the existence of the oil.⁴⁶

Do you know what is written in 2 Peter 1:3-4? “*...his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness...*” Let me tell you the rest in my own words: Through an intimate relationship with Jesus and while in this relationship praying with the “*exceeding great and precious promises*”.

At the moment we by faith in Christ become the children of God, we also become God’s heirs and all His resources are at our disposal. Everything we need in order to be men and women of God and fruitful witnesses for Christ – including wisdom, love and strength – is at our disposal. However, many Christians live in spiritual poverty, because they do not know how to make use of the spiritual riches, which God has already bestowed on them! Like Mr. Yates before oil was discovered on his property, they live in ignorance of their unlimited possessions.

Jesus’ urgent appeal: Pray for the Holy Spirit

There is a unique passage in the Bible in which our Lord Jesus urges us ten times to pray for the Holy Spirit. I know of no other passage in which Jesus calls our attention to something with such tender urgency, except for His invitation to abide in Him. This passage is a lesson on prayer. The passage on praying for the Holy Spirit is in Luke 11:9-13. (See also chapter 1 “Jesus’ most precious gift”)

Jesus’ command: Be filled with the Spirit.

We not only want to repeat this important statement, but also pay particular attention to the following in this chapter: “**And you are complete in Him.**”

E. G. White said: “To Jesus... the Holy Spirit was given [daily] without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling [and daily asks the Lord for the

⁴³ E. G. White: *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p. 676.2

⁴⁴ E. G. White: *Ye Shall Receive Power* (1995), p. 307.3 (October 24)

⁴⁵ E. G. White: *Ye Shall Receive Power* (1995), p. 306.6 (October 23)

⁴⁶ Dr. William R. Bright: *Erfüllt mit dem Heiligen Geist – Wie erfährt man das?* (Neuhausen, 1971), 27

Holy Spirit].”⁴⁷ “Our Lord Himself has given the command, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), and this command is also a promise of its fulfillment. It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Christ should “all the fullness dwell,” and “in Him ye are made full.” (Col. 1:19 and 2:10)⁴⁸

Here we learn:

- ▶ The Holy Ghost lived in Jesus without measure.
- ▶ He desires for us to live in complete surrender so that the Holy Ghost can live in us to the same extent.
- ▶ For this reason Jesus himself gave the command: “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18)
- ▶ His object is that we will have life more abundantly. (John 10:10, Col. 2:10)
- ▶ Thus, it is necessary to be in Him. Jesus in us has great and valuable consequences.

Praying by faith

It’s about praying by faith. “...*That we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith.*” (Galatians 3:14). – “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him.*” (Hebrews 11:6) – “*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*” (Ephesians 3:17). It is necessary to know that after my prayer for the Holy Spirit I have really received Him. Our wonderful God has shown us how we can easily have faith in Him. It is by praying with promises. (See also the booklet “Steps to Personal Revival”, chapter 5, “The Key to Practical Experience”, where the topic is treated more extensively.)

E. G. White even says: “*The Spirit awaits our demand and reception.*”⁴⁹

David Wolkwitz adds: “Can you imagine “demanding” something from God? In this case, the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Such a thought makes us shudder with fear. It sounds disrespectful and even blasphemous to even think such a thing. And yet, this term is used by the Lord’s messenger in various passages of her writings. What does she mean?

First, we should recognize that God is only too happy to give us this gift, because He loves us and we need it so badly. Secondly, it means

⁴⁷ Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 20.3

⁴⁸ Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing p. 20.3

⁴⁹ E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), p. 121.1

that this gift is extremely important for us. Since we are told that this gift is waiting for our demand, then it clearly shows us that when we long for the **continual presence of Jesus** in our lives so that He can lead and guide us, and knowing we are fully surrendered to God, we may then in trust and confidence make our demand. We need to think carefully about this.”⁵⁰

“Demanding” something implies strong interest, it has to do with something I absolutely need or want to have, it implies seriousness on the side of the person asking.

We should lay our inhibitions to “demand” something aside, when we remember that: “*He (God) is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name.*”⁵¹

It is a question of surrendering ourselves with our whole heart to Jesus every day and by faith obtaining the great gift of God – the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul’s wonderful intercessory prayer

For this topic we want to look at Ephesians 3:14-21, where we find a wonderful intercessory prayer from the apostle Paul for the church in Ephesus. The outline is as follows:

1. He asks for the power of the Holy Spirit for them
2. that thereby Christ may dwell in their hearts
3. that the character of Jesus – the fruit of the Spirit – may develop within them and
4. that they might be filled with the fullness of God

“*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*” (Ephesians 3:14-19)

⁵⁰ David Wolkwitz: *Der Weg zu einer kraftvollen Erweckung*, (NRW, Abt. Heimatmission), p. 205 / *The Way to a Powerful Revival*

⁵¹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p. 668.1

How can I obtain inner strength?

The foundation of our religious life is shown in verse 16: “...that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might **by his Spirit** in the inner man.”

We need strength. A life full of strength brings joy. Our wonderful Lord wants us to have abundant strength in our lives. This strength for the inner man is provided by the Holy Spirit. In the booklet “Steps to Personal Revival”⁵² it shows why it is necessary to consecrate ourselves daily to Jesus and to pray daily for the Holy Spirit. And by praying with promises we can be sure to receive the Holy Spirit as soon as we ask. I recommend reading this booklet again – it’s so important.

Christ in us

What comes next according to verse 17? “...that **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.**”

Are we sufficiently aware of this marvelous truth? When we live with the Holy Spirit, then it is a fact that Jesus lives in our hearts. We can neither feel nor measure this. We have to believe it. If you believe this, then speak to Him now and again and tell Him: Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You dwell in my heart. Or: Lord, I am so glad You live in me.

Andrew Murray says: “In this way Jesus takes you into fellowship with Him with the objective that His life becomes part of your life.”⁵³

E. G. White says: “*The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul.*”⁵⁴ And: “*In the plan of restoring in men the divine image, it was provided that the Holy Spirit should move upon human minds, and be as the presence of Christ, a molding agency upon human character.*”⁵⁵ And also: “*A healthy Christian is one who has Christ formed within, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).*”⁵⁶

The text says that Christ dwells in our hearts **by faith**. Trust is the foundation of faith. It is a matter of entrusting my whole life to Jesus. It’s about our first basic surrender of our lives and then consequently, the daily surrender to Jesus Christ.

⁵² Helmut Haubeil: *Steps to Personal Revival*

⁵³ Andrew Murray: *Bleibe in Jesus*, (Leun, 2012), p. 149 / *Remain in Jesus*

⁵⁴ *Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, edited by Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, 1980), p. 1112

⁵⁵ E. G. White: *Ye Shall Receive Power* (1995), February 8.

⁵⁶ E. G. White: *Ye Shall Receive Power*, (1995), February 4

Why is continual and complete surrender to God so important?

In Romans 12:1 God requests the following: “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*” And in Proverbs 23:26 is the invitation: “*My son, give me thine heart...*”

The meaning of surrender is explained in more detail in chapter 2 “Surrender to Jesus”. It is also explained well in the book “Steps to Christ” in chapter 5 “Consecration”.

Our surrender to God’s love brings a great blessing. If Jesus is allowed to guide our lives, then He can free us from the tyranny of our egos (envy, anger, contentiousness, etc.).

E. G. White says: “*The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ.*”⁵⁷ In another passage she writes: “*We shall not gain the victory through numbers, but through the full surrender of the soul to Jesus.*”⁵⁸

Understanding a revealed secret

Let’s proceed to Ephesians 3:18, first part: “... [that Ye] ... may be able to comprehend with all saints ...”

What should we all comprehend? Just what the previous verse explained: the secret that Christ lives in us (through the Holy Spirit) and thereby our lives are being changed, because we are rooted and established in the love of God. This means: Jesus Christ develops His character in us.

A brother writes: “The truth about ‘being in Christ’ and ‘Jesus in us’ is so simple and yet so difficult to comprehend that most Christians have not fully understood it.”⁵⁹

Paul says in Colossians 1:25-26: “*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which his given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages ..., but now is made manifest to his saints...*” **What secret?** Verse 27: “**To whom (the saints) God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**”

⁵⁷ E. G. White: *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p. 805.3

⁵⁸ E. G. White: *Sons and Daughters of God* (1955), p. 279.2

⁵⁹ Dennis Smith: *Abiding in Christ*, p. 12

E. G. WHITE ON "CHRIST IN YOU"

Consequences of oneness in Christ

"When God's people are one in the unity of the Spirit, all of Phariseism, all of self-righteousness, which was the sin of the Jewish nation, will be expelled from all hearts ... God will make known the mystery which hath been hidden for ages. He will make known what are the "riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).⁶¹

Joseph, Daniel and his companions

"You should be prepared to follow the example of these noble youth. Never be ashamed of your colors; put them on, unfurl them to the gaze of men and angels. Do not be controlled by false modesty, by false prudence which suggests to you a course of action contrary to this advice. By your choice words and a consistent course of action, by your propriety, your earnest piety, make a telling confession of your faith, determined that Christ shall occupy the throne in the soul temple; and lay your talents without reserve at His feet to be employed in His service."⁶²

Family life

„Christ in Each Heart Will Bring Unity – If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence. Anything that would mar the peace and unity of the family should be firmly repressed, and kindness and love should be cherished. He who manifests the spirit of tenderness, forbearance, and love will find that the same spirit will be reflected upon him. Where the Spirit of God reigns, there will be no talk of unsuitability in the marriage relation. If Christ indeed is formed within, the hope of glory, there will be union and love in the home. Christ abiding in the heart of the wife will be at agreement with Christ abiding in the heart of the husband. They will be striving together for the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him."⁶³

The mystery hid for ages and now revealed is that Jesus Himself wants to live in us through the Holy Spirit. The text says that this is our hope of glory. This means that the fullness of life, that God wants for our present life and at the same time bestows us with eternal life, is thus guaranteed.

E.G. White illustrates this secret, called "Christ in you", the hope for glory (Col. 1:27), as follows: **"A knowledge of this mystery furnishes a key to every other. It opens to the soul the treasures of the universe, the possibilities of infinite development."**⁶⁰

The Bible often uses expressions such as "Christ in you" and similar terms such as "in Christ", "in Him", "in the Lord", and "in the beloved". For example, this expression is the key word in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

Think about Apostle Paul's testimony: **"... yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."** (Gal. 2:20)

In Romans 15:18 NKJV he writes: **"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me."**

And other well-known texts: **"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."** (2 Cor. 2:14) – **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.** (2 Cor. 5:17) The focus here is laid on the change of character by the fruit of the Spirit.

"Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Eph. 2:10)

"The dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. 4:16)

"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." (1 John 2:5)

"... God sending his own Son ... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:3-4)

If we would look in a concordance, we would find many such valuable texts under the key words: in Christ, in the beloved, in the Lord, in Him (Christ).

⁶⁰ E. G. White: *Education* (1903) p.172

⁶¹ E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (1958), Vol.1, p. 386.1

⁶² E. G. White, *Messages to Young People* (1930), p. 28.1

⁶³ E. G. White: *Adventist Home* (1952), p. 120.1

*You want your homes to be like Abraham's. He commanded his household after him. He taught them to obey the commands of God. These are the lessons, mothers, that you are to patiently teach your children. You cannot afford to spend time in studying the fashions of the day. Teach them that they are Christ's property. We are making characters today. Young men, young women, you are determining your lot in the future today. Let Christ come in. He will preserve you from temptation.*⁶⁴

Overcoming

„If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.“ 2 Corinthians 5:17. Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is „Christ in you, the hope of glory.“ (Col. 1:27)⁶⁵

Jesus' Letters

“In every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world. If you are Christ's follower, He sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him. Perhaps they do not read the Bible, or do not hear the voice that speaks to them in its pages; they do not see the love of God through His works. But if you are a true representative of Jesus, it may be that through you they will be led to understand something of His goodness and be won to love and serve Him.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ E. G. White: *Temperance* (1949), p. 290.2

⁶⁵ E. G. White: *Acts of the Apostles* (1911), p. 476.1

⁶⁶ E. G. White: *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 115.1



The personal side of God's love

Through this intimate connection, which Christ wants to enter into with us through the Holy Spirit, He shows us in a special way the personal side of God's great love. It is incomprehensible that Christ lives in me. But His word assures us of this, which makes this true.

In Eph. 3:18 we read: "... [that Ye] may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

A father, who was on an overseas trip with his son, wanted to explain God's love. The father said: Look out over the prow of the ship – and now the stern – this is the length of God's love. And now look to the left and to the right – this is the width of God's love. Now look up into the sky – this is the height of God's love. Now look over the water. The ocean is deep under us. That is the depth of God's love. The youngster reflected a moment on these explanations and then exclaimed with a shining face: "Dad, do you know what the best part of it is? We are in the middle of it."

Everyone, who daily consecrates his life to Christ and is filled by the Holy Spirit, is in the middle of God's love. There is no better place we could live. I pray every morning that our wonderful Father will keep me in this place.

The ultimate achievement: life in abundance

In Eph. 3:19 Paul wants us to understand Jesus's love for us and that through this love we are filled with the fullness of God. Verse 19 says: "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Can we see what depends on Christ living in us? It is the way to the fullness of God. In John 10:10b Christ says that He came so that we may have life more abundantly. Colossians 2:9-10 says: "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..." Do you have the fullness of God? God wants to give it to you. Take the necessary steps!

Answers beyond our requests

We may pray that the Lord answers our prayers according to His promise in Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." We may ask, claiming this promise, that our wonderful Lord not only answers our prayers as we have petitioned, but rather beyond our request, beyond our comprehension – abundantly according to the riches of His glory and power. In addition we may pray according to Jer. 33:3 that God answers our prayer and reveals great and mighty things to us: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

What effects does Jesus' life have in me?

1 Cor. 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Christ is made unto us **wisdom**. We can act wisely with Christ in us. Prov. 8:11: "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." – Eccl. 2:13: "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."

Christ is made unto us **righteousness**. This means that the righteousness, which was lost at the fall, can be regained through Him. A valuable text in Rom. 8:3-4 illustrates this: "God sending his own Son ... condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be **fulfilled in us**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Please note that the text says that righteousness is **fulfilled through Jesus** in those who walk in the Spirit. This is how Christ lives in us.

Dennis Smith writes: "righteousness by faith has a justifying and sanctifying aspect. Righteousness means that God frees the believer from sin and the penalty and clothes the repentant sinner with Christ's righteousness (complete obedience).⁶⁷ Thus the most marvelous trade takes place: Christ takes my guilt and gives me His righteousness. Through this trade we stand before the Father as if we had

⁶⁷ Dennis Smith, *40 Tage (Nr.2) Andachten und Gebete zur Vertiefung Deiner Gottesbeziehung*, 26 / *40 Days Prayers and Devotions to Revive Your Experience With Christ*, (R&H, 2011), 18

never sinned. *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”* (Psalm 103:12) By God’s grace we can walk through life free of guilt.

Christ is made unto us **sanctification**. What does sanctification mean? *“True sanctification means perfect love, perfect obedience, perfect conformity to the will of God.”*⁶⁸ The importance of the indwelling of Christ for a life of joyful obedience will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 “Obedience through Jesus”.

Christ is made unto us salvation, i.e. forgiveness of all guilt, freedom from the bondage of sin, eternal life in God’s glory. Jesus paid the ransom with His sacrifice. During the time of slave trafficking in Africa, the prisoners had an iron collar locked around their necks and were then linked to the other prisoners with a chain. Occasionally one of these poor people was ransomed along the way. As soon as the ransom was paid, the prisoner was freed from his iron collar. Jesus has ransomed us, he has paid for us.

What else does Jesus accomplish in me?

Jesus’ **mindset** will develop step by step in us. We can also claim Philippians 2:5 when we pray: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”* When we allow Christ, then He will let His manner of thinking and acting unfold in us. We then love what He loves. We keep away from the things, which He doesn’t want.

He enables me to be His witness

Since Jesus came *“to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10), He will naturally lead people to salvation through me. *“Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him.”*⁶⁹ *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me.”* (Acts 1:8) We will come back to this topic in chapter 5 “Attractive Faith through Jesus”.

68 E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (1911), p. 565.1

69 E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 115.1

Praying in the Holy Spirit / Praying in the name of Jesus / Praying and claiming promises

God urges us to be: *“... praying in the Holy Ghost.”* (Jude 20) When Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, then we can pray in the Holy Spirit as well as in the name of Jesus. Jesus assures us: *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”* (John 14:13) We are clearly told: *“We must not only pray in Christ’s name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”*⁷⁰

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? *“...to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the **mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works.**”*⁷¹

Thus, praying in the name of Christ has four aspects:

1. Praying in the spirit of Jesus means being filled with the Holy Spirit
2. Believe in His promises, i.e. claiming promises while we pray.
3. Rely on His grace, i.e. it has to do with trust, with faith, with the wonderful mutual trust-relationship with God.
4. Work His works, i.e. through His Spirit be obedient in all things.

When we remain in Christ, then all these prerequisites are fulfilled by His grace. Thus, praying in the name of Jesus means praying in His power. He promised to answer our prayers. This shows that Jesus has immense confidence in those who abide in Him.

Prayer with promises⁷²: We may take advantage of all the promises through Christ in us. *“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen.”* (2 Cor. 1:20) See also 2 Peter 1:3-4: *“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (this means an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ) Whereby are given unto us **exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature....**”* Note God’s wonderful way:

70 E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), p. 147.3

71 E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 100.2

72 Claiming promises in prayer is dealt with in more detail in *Steps to Personal Revival* by H. Haubeil, Chapter 5 The Key to Practical Experience

- ▶ God has already given us what we need to live and for a godly way of life.
- ▶ We receive these gifts through an intimate relationship with Christ.
- ▶ These things are bestowed on us in this relationship through claiming promises in prayer, i.e. through prayers of faith we will partake of the divine nature.

Deliverance from the power of sin

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life **in Christ Jesus** hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Rom. 8:1-2)

Why is there no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? First, because Christ has taken my guilt of sin upon Himself. Second, when He is in us, the bondage of sin over us is broken; I am freed from the law of sin. This means that we no longer have to sin, but we still can sin. Gal. 5:16 says something important about the deliverance from the power of sin: *“Walk in the Spirit [meaning: live constantly with the Holy Spirit], and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”*

The next verses in Galatians 5 (vs. 17-18) explain that this has to do with life with the Holy Ghost. Verses 19-21 list the works of the flesh, which we no longer have to do when we live with the Holy Ghost. Christ in us protects us from sin and the fallen angels as 1 John 5:18 affirms: *“We know that those who are children of God do not keep on sinning. The Son of **God keeps them safe. The evil one can’t harm them.**”* (NIRV) Christ fills our hearts with the Holy Spirit that evil has no room. However, at this point, we must keep in mind that *“the inward man is renewed day by day”* (2 Cor. 4:16).

Christ in us encourages us not to sin

In 1 John 3:6-9 we read the following solemn words regarding sin: *“Whosoever **abideth in him** sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy*

the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

Experts in Old Greek tell us that these pointed words about sinning refer to habitual sinning. According to the original Greek text: *“...he doesn’t sin continuously”, i.e. habitually (but occasionally he does fall into sin). As God’s children we do what is right and we keep God’s commandments ...”*⁷³

This means that with Christ in us and with us, it enables us to give up our sinful habits. Our life with “Christ in us” also helps us have victory over besetting sins.

Will we become “carnal” again by sinning?

Let’s bear in mind that through this wonderful change we don’t achieve a sinless state. We can fall into sin through weakness, rashness or foolishness. If such a situation occurs, then we need to “breathe spiritually”. This means confessing our sin, accepting forgiveness and again asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As long as we “breathe spiritually”, we will remain spiritual Christians and do not become carnal. Sin does not cut off our spiritual relationship to God. But it is a disturbance that we have to confront.

We will become carnal again, if we allow unbelief to take root and we quit “breathing spiritually”. Our sinful nature remains until the second coming of Christ. No apostle ever claimed to be sinless. However, “Christ in us” makes a decisive change in our relation to sin.

The practical result

Hence, the apostle John writes: *“These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1). Thus, God desires us to lead a sinless life in Christ, but if we do sin, then we may ask our advocate for forgiveness and receive it.

E. G. White says: *“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the third person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.”*⁷⁴

⁷³ Werner E. Lange, Hrgb., *Unser größtes Bedürfnis* (Lüneburg 2011), 31

⁷⁴ E. G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (1995), January 5, par. 2

So, through Christ living in us through the Holy Spirit, the power of sin over us is broken and it will decidedly reduce the frequency with which we sin.

Good health

Christ in us will care for our health: *“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”* (3 John 2) – *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”* (1 Thess. 5:23-24)

I recently heard a lecture by the geneticist Dr. Sang Lee. He emphasized that through a trusting relationship with Christ our genes work well and produce a health hormone.

The connection between faith and health – this is the message that the world urgently needs. This message can only be carried by Jesus’ disciples, who daily consecrate themselves with all they are and have, who daily ask for and receive the Holy Spirit and who personally live according to the health reform advice.

Studies done on 35,000 people under the age of 30 under the supervision of Professor Grossarth-Maticek showed that:

The strongest health factor is a loving, spontaneous relationship with God. When this relationship exists, then other health factors, such as a healthy diet, exercise and well-being, are many times stronger.⁷⁵

This clearly shows the meaning of the following Bible verse:

“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” (1 Tim. 4:8 NKJV)

In book 3 of his 40-days series Dennis Smith (40 Days God’s Health Principles for His Last-Day People) shows quite a different approach to health than what we are commonly acquainted with. He shares how the power of the Holy Spirit motivates and works to change lifestyles. Hence, emotional health has great importance. Smith relates: “These

⁷⁵ According to the “Heidelberger prospektiven Interventionsstudie”. Quelle: Ronald Grossarth-Maticek: Systemische Epidemiologie und präventive Verhaltensmedizin in chronischer Erkrankungen. Strategien zur Aufrechterhaltung der Gesundheit. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999, S. 109-111

40-day devotions will show us how we can collaborate with God in order to obtain complete physical, emotional, and spiritual renewal, which he wants us to experience.”⁷⁶ A businessman wrote:

“I accepted the health message through daily being filled with the Holy Spirit. Before this, not a single health seminar ever had an effect on me. I loved meat and wasn’t too particular about what kind I ate; I also drank coffee and black tea. I didn’t think this was a problem. Occasionally I also drank a beer. Since 2009 I have been praying daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He convinced me to abstain from the consumption of meat, coffee, black tea and beer. I became a vegetarian. I have come to realize that a life with the Holy Ghost is the foundation for victory in all things, including temperance and lifestyle.”⁷⁷

A sister wrote under the heading “Complete surrender changed my life” (we are sharing only the health aspects here): “I daily invite the Holy Ghost to live and work in my heart. I have clearer thoughts and dress more “womanly”. Moreover, I don’t eat constantly anymore. That was impossible for me in my own power. I can meet the daily demands much more peacefully and the stress doesn’t make my stomach turn to knots. God also gave me the strength to stop drinking coffee. Previously, this would have been unthinkable, because when I quit drinking coffee I had horrible headaches for five days – these are severe withdrawal symptoms. This time I didn’t even think about what the consequences would be for me. I only knew that I didn’t want to do it anymore. Today, I have no more desire for it. I had a similar experience with meat. My family and I never wanted to abstain from eating meat. Today it is easy for me – I have no more desire for it.”⁷⁸

One of our leading health experts wrote: “The real need of our time is not simply health education – we have excellent information. What is needed, is health information in connection with the power to put it into practice. It’s all about the power to change.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Dennis Smith, *40 Days (Nr.3) God’s Health Principles for His Last-Day People*, (R&H 2011) Day 1

⁷⁷ E-mails from a businessman on March 3 and March 21, 2013, shortened and adapted

⁷⁸ The complete testimony can be read in German at www.missionsbrief.de – Archiv – Missionsbrief Nr. 42, S. 17 *Völlige Hingabe veränderte mein Leben*.

⁷⁹ Don Macintosh, Director Newstart Global, Weimar, USA, in D’Sozo, (Remnant USA), Foreword.

The gospel gives us the power to change – to be more precise – Christ in us through the Holy Ghost.

The great change in the life of Hudson Taylor

When Hudson Taylor was head of the China-Inland mission, he received a letter from his missionary colleague McCarthy. God used this letter to open his eyes to the wonderful truth of our abiding in Christ and His abiding in us. It has to do with the truth about the secret of the union between the believer and Christ. From this day on Taylor's path with God was a path of peace, rest and victory. His missionary colleagues noticed this amazing change. They commented on how Taylor was taking a new path as a new man in a new world to share his testimony of what the Lord had done for him.

Taylor wrote a letter to his sister in England. He tried to explain this wonderful truth he had discovered and the wonderful experience he had made with his God. He wrote: "My work has never been as extensive, as full of responsibility and as difficult as now, but now the pressure and strain have completely disappeared. The past month was probably the happiest month in my life. I'm longing to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for me. I don't know if I am capable of making it clear, because there isn't really anything new or strange or marvelous and yet everything is new! In a nutshell: 'Where I was blind I can now see!'"

When my burden was biggest, God used a sentence in a letter from McCarthy to make the scales fall from my eyes. **The Spirit of God revealed to me the truth about our oneness with Jesus as I had never known before. ...**"

Taylor went on in his letter to describe how the Lord had opened his understanding for the words of Christ – that He is the vine and the believers are the branches. He wrote: "Oh the joy of seeing this truth!" Then he continued: "The sweetest part – if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification (consensus and surrender) with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. It is more necessary that He considers this than me. For in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient."

Dennis Smith says the following about Taylor's experience:

Hudson Taylor found the secret of victory on his path with God. He discovered how he could have great peace in every situation in his service for Christ. God offers the same victory and the same peace to all of His children. Are you longing for such victory and peace? It is my prayer that everybody who reads this book finds precisely this victory and peace in Christ – a joy that seemed unattainable before.⁸⁰

I join in this appeal and wish everyone, in whom Christ is dwelling through the Holy Spirit, an overflowing and fruitful life for Christ, which is characterized by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." (John 15:5)

Jesus says about Himself: "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10b) Jesus has a great desire that you and I can say: Jesus Christ, who lives in me, accomplishes His works.

"Christ in the heart, Christ in the life, this is our safety."⁸¹

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I marvel at the fact that you want to share my life, when I give my life to you and am filled with the Holy Spirit. I want to praise you and thank you that through God's grace you have become wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption for me. (1 Cor. 1:30) Please, give me joyful and visible growth through fellowship with You through the Holy Ghost.

Recommended literature

Bill Bright: *The Holy Spirit – the key to supernatural living* This book is out of print, but used copies can be purchased online. The German version can be read online or printed out at: www.missionbrief.de – Nachfolge – Jüngerschaft – Mitteilbare Konzepte.

Dennis Smith: *Prayers and Devotions to prepare for the second coming*, book 1. Especially day 4: "Christ in you" (p. 18) as well as the forth part of the book "Spirit Baptism and Abiding in Christ" (p. 81-102).

⁸⁰ Dennis Smith: *Abiding in Christ*, 10-11

⁸¹ E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), p. 511.1

OBEDIENCE THROUGH JESUS

*How can I live in joyful obedience?
What are the characteristics of obedience of faith?
Why is it a joy?
Why is obedience for my own good? Obedience
through divine-human collaboration.
Who does what? How much obedience is expected
from me and why?*

Hudson Taylor compares the Bible with a railway timetable

Theology students asked the aged China missionary during a conference in Frankfurt/Main: How can you can believe every word in the Bible? His answer was:

“When you want to travel home tomorrow, then you will open the railway timetable and check the departures. And if you find that a train leaves at 7 a.m., then you won’t ask any further questions, but go to the railway station the following day and find your train ready for departure. Just as you use the railway timetable, I have done the same with the Bible and its commandments and promises for the past 50 years. I have experienced its instructions to always be true in my long life and amongst hundreds of deadly perils. For example, when the Bible says: *‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’* (Matthew 6:33) I followed these directives and have never been disappointed in any critical situations. If you do the same, then you will have similar experiences.”⁷⁷

77 Report by Prof. Dr. Karl Heim in a devotional, which is currently not on hand to me.

Obedience through Christ. This obedience has a special name: obedience of faith.

To what end does God call ministers?

In Rom. 1:5 I found a directive of great importance for me as minister of the gospel: *“By Whom [Jesus Christ] we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.”*

This means that God calls people to His ministry in order to lead others to obedience of faith. This requires that I understand this matter well and with God’s help I am a good example. When I do this, then I am acting in His name, which means in the authority of Jesus Christ.

The closing words of the epistle to the Romans adds another thought. In chapter 16:25-27 we see how God wants to achieve this obedience of faith.

How does obedience of faith come about?

*“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience of faith**: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”* (Rom. 16:25-27)

These verses explain that a mystery was revealed for a definite purpose – to raise obedience of faith. These verses don’t explain what the mystery is. We find the explanation in Colossians 1:27: *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

What does Christ achieve in us?

The mystery is: Christ in us. And what is the result when obedience of faith is achieved in Christ?

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

We have a new life with Christ in us. Can we detect this by certain changes in our character? Obedience of faith is achieved through

“Christ in us”. Another verse describes this new life as follows: *“...that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”* (Eph. 3:19)

How do we perceive a life in obedience of faith?

“His commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3) – *“For my yoke is easy.”* (Matt. 11:30)

Psalm 119: *“I will delight myself in thy commandments (vs. 47)”, “better unto me than thousands of gold and silver (vs. 72)”, “sweeter than honey to my mouth (vs. 103)”, “I rejoice at thy word (vs. 162)”, “great peace (vs. 165)”.*

Yes, obedience of faith is a pleasant thing.

We need a firm foundation for our life

The German poet Matthias Claudius writes: *“Man needs a firm anchor, something that does not depend on him, but rather something he can depend on.”*⁷⁸

Nowadays many people suffer under emotional distress, since they have no firm foundation due to a lack of faith. Through an intimate relationship God wants to give us a firm foundation based on His word.

This Christian poet shows us that we need a firm foundation and reliable standards in our lives. Where can we find a firm foundation? God laid this foundation a long time ago. His name is: Jesus Christ. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor. 3:11) Jesus is the only One who can provide a firm foundation for our life.

Where can we find the best standards for our life?

Who is even qualified to set standards? Who can dictate? Who can determine what is right? The Bible offers a clear answer in Psalm 99:4 (NKJV): *“You (God) have executed justice and righteousness.”* And Psalm 111:7-8 (NKJV) adds: *“The works of His hands are verity and justice; All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.”* (cf. Psalm 148:6)

⁷⁸ Matthias Claudius (Edition Steinkopf, 1982), 10

God, the Creator, has determined what is right. Nobody except God is entitled to set standards or rules. The Creator alone, the great Owner of all things, has this right. Furthermore, nobody else is in a position to determine what is right. Nobody else has a clear overview. God alone is omniscient and all-wise.

Furthermore, the character of the one, who sets the standards, is of great importance. The Bible shows us that God is love; He is the source of love, truth, joy and justice. Because of His wonderful character, His infinite ability and omniscience, God was able to optimally lay rules for angels, inhabitants of other worlds, mankind and animals. The loving Creator created the most favorable conditions for life.

He not only did this with the laws of nature, for example the constants on this earth, the distance from the sun and moon, the orientation of the earth's axis, but also laid laws for the happiness of humanity in ethical and moral ways. (cf. Jeremiah 7:23). Our loving Heavenly Father established wonderful regulations for us. We want to keep this thought in mind, while we discuss a strange phenomenon in the end times – the great confusion concerning obedience to God's laws.

Confusion regarding the obedience of God's principles

2 Cor. 4:3-4 tells us: *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*

Satan blinds and disguises. A blinded mind can imply two things: First, that certain things aren't even seen. Certain things are “disguised” or “hidden”. On the other hand, it can also mean “charmed”, i.e. wrong points of view are seen as right. We don't realize how cleverly they are foisted on us. In any case, this disguising and blinding prevents the right view.

The text says that this happens to non-believers. But what is shocking is that basically the same thing happens to carnal Christians. They haven't completely surrendered themselves to Jesus. That's why the “god of this world” can blind them. I am convinced, however, that Satan attempts this with spiritual Christians as well. Jesus says in Matt. 24:24: *“If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”*

*“Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*⁷⁹ Jesus clearly describes this in His message to the Laodiceans in Rev. 3:17.

In His discourse on last-day events in Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus mentions one sign of the end four times: **deception**. Deception is already very strong, but it will still increase. But because they are being blinded, people do not hardly notice it.

One area, in which there is great deception, is the obedience to God's will, towards God's word, towards God's laws. Many have no clear idea what kind of obedience God wants and how it is possible for us to be obedient. It has to do with **obedience of faith** – this is a special kind of obedience.

What is obedience of faith?

There are several possibilities to define this term that the apostle Paul coined. It is definitely an obedience that exactly follows God's plan for redemption. It has to do with entering a real trust relationship with Jesus through the Holy Ghost. The result is my salvation through Christ's sacrifice. My surrender to Jesus includes keeping the commandments through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not obedience through my own efforts. Paul took a deliberate stand against the pharisaical law-abidance, which meant earning a way into God's kingdom by precisely observing God's commands. He makes it clear that obedience is necessary for true discipleship, but this obedience differs from that of the Jews. It is a joyful acceptance of salvation through Jesus Christ. It produces acts of obedience in my life as Jesus' disciple.

This obedience is based on trust, which comes from the heart. Dennis Smith writes: “When someone lives in a close relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, then obedience comes naturally and from the heart, without giving it great thought.”⁸⁰ It is an obedience that is made possible by a divine-human cooperation. We will discuss this later in more detail.

⁷⁹ E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), p. 414.3

⁸⁰ Dennis Smith, 40-Page (Nr.1) Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming, 21, 22

God has revealed a mystery

Let me summarize Rom. 16:25-27: By the eternal God's command a mystery was revealed, to establish obedience of faith.

By order of God this mystery - Christ in us – achieves obedience of faith. Obedience of faith is thus an obedience, which is voluntary and is based on faith, trust and love. We enter a relationship of trust with God; based on this trust and on our understanding that His laws are in our best interest, we decide to be obedient.

Faith enables Obedience

*“Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.”*⁸¹

What does this mystery consist of?

The Apostle Paul shows us in Col. 1:25-27 that he was *“...made a minister, according to the dispensation of God...to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages... but now is made manifest to his saints ...”* What kind of mystery is this? *“God would make known [to His saints] what is the riches of the glory of this mystery ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

This mystery, which was hid and is now revealed, is that Jesus Himself wants to live in us through the Holy Ghost. The text says that this is the hope of glory for us. This means that the fullness of life that God wants to give us now and eternal life in glory can be achieved and guaranteed. This intimate relationship, which Christ wants with us through the Holy Spirit, shows God's great love in a completely different way.

“Christ in us” is the heart of this mystery; in the broadest sense it is the gospel or the plan of redemption.

Rom. 16:25-26 tells us that through this mystery obedience of faith is established or accomplished. This means that through Christ we are able to and also want to obey.

How is Christ in us?

How is it possible that Christ can live in us? We read in Eph. 3:16-17, 19: *“... that He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love ..., that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

We are told:

1. Through the Holy Ghost we receive abundant power for our inner being,
2. Through the Holy Ghost Christ lives in us by faith,
3. Thus we will be rooted and grounded in love.
When Jesus Christ lives in us, then He develops His character of love in us. The Bible also calls this “the fruit of the Spirit”.
(Gal. 5:22)
4. This leads us to a life *“filled with all the fullness of God”*
(see also John 10:10; Col. 1:9-10)

Christ in us means that our obedience is now possible, because it is brought forth in us by Jesus. E. G. White says: *“When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ.”*⁸²

He lives in us when we completely trust Him, i.e. when we have completely committed ourselves to Him. The resulting obedience is obedience of faith. Christ wants to live His victorious life in us.

A further valuable thought is found in Gal. 4:19. Paul says there: *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you ...”* Paul is very anxious for Christ to live in the believers. He said: *“until Christ be formed in you.”* How long does it take for a person to be fully developed? 16-17 years. I believe that Paul was referring to a growth process here. Meaning when we daily dedicate our lives to Christ and daily ask in faith for the Holy Spirit, then Christ is in us, but there is a growth process in this relationship.

⁸¹ E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 60.2

⁸² E. G. White: *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), p. 314.5

Ambiguities

Unfortunately, there are several unclear points regarding obedience. First, we want to look at what essential points Jesus mentioned regarding our life of faith: *“Without me ye can do nothing.”* (John 15:5) This definitely also applies to the important area of obedience.

Secondly, let’s look at a relevant statement from Ellen G. White that explains basic principles regarding obedience: *“He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*⁸³

Three important points are made:

1. It is impossible to reach heaven by my own works. This means that wanting to earn something from God (as in righteousness by works) is an error.
2. However, obedience is an indispensable part of a life with God, since Jesus’ disciples are called to live in conformity with God’s will.
3. Obedience should not be our own work, not from our own strength, but rather to will and to do should be accomplished by Christ in us.

Now, we want to look more closely at how this is achieved.

Impossibility

There are many who believe that they have to earn heaven either partially or completely. They think they have to follow this wrong course, because they do not know the marvelous way, which God has provided for them. They try to achieve something that is impossible. Everyone, in whom Jesus doesn’t live through the Holy Spirit, is trying an impossibility, no matter how long or how short their list of obedience points is.

Scripture teaches clearly that we cannot be saved by our own merits (works by the law), rather only by faith in God. Rom. 3:28: *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*

⁸³ E. G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 1st, 1890, par. 11



Obedience is indispensable

On the other hand, Jesus emphasizes obedience. His last words were: *“Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* (Matt. 28:20)

Here He is clearly talking about obedience. The commandments, which Jesus Christ wrote with His own hand and gave to Moses at Sinai, require our obedience. This expectation from God, which the Bible testifies to, is summarized by E.G. White as follows: *“All His gifts are promised on condition of obedience.”*⁸⁴

In “Christ’s Object Lessons” we read: *“The character of God is expressed in His law; and in order for you to be in harmony with God, the principles of His law must be the spring of your every action. Christ does not lessen the claims of the law. In unmistakable language He presents obedience to it as the condition of eternal life.”*⁸⁵

The Apostle John shows us that obedience indicates if we know God: *“And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* (1 John 2:3-4)

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” (1 John 3:24)

Obedience is also an indicator that shows if we love God: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”* (1 John 5:3)

The Bible shows us that obedience is a sign of the remnant, the end-time church. Rev. 12:17: *“...which keep the commandments of God.”* Rev. 14:12: *“Here are they that keep the commandments of God.”*

Charles Finney, probably the most successful revivalist preacher of our time, said: *“Revival is a new beginning of obedience to God.”*⁸⁶

We also want to quote the Bible Study Guide from August 31, 2011: *“Obedience is not a means to salvation, but rather is a means which reveals the consequences and blessings of salvation in the life of the redeemed.”*⁸⁷

⁸⁴ E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), p. 145:1

⁸⁵ E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), p. 391:1-2

⁸⁶ Cited in *Unser größtes Bedürfnis* (Our greatest need), published by Werner E. Lange, Lüneburg 2011, 102

⁸⁷ Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Aug. 31, 2011

Obedience in and through Christ

We can only be obedient through Christ in us. He alone can achieve this. As a human being, Christ was a model of obedience for us. Hebrew 5:8: *“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered.”*

The following verse is very clear: *“And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* (Heb. 5:9)

Acts 5:32 confirms this: God gives the Holy Ghost to those who obey Him.

Does this mean that our obedience to God’s commandments is a condition for our redemption? Not at all! Instead, Paul wants to again emphasize: The path to redemption is by faith alone and on this path we are to be “obedient” to God. Then He will work through His Spirit in a wondrous way so that we willingly live as God wants us to.

This is exactly what Paul writes in Roman 8:3-4: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

Living continuously in the Holy Spirit

“To walk after the Spirit” means to live continuously in the Holy Spirit. This text shows us clearly that the necessary obedience is fulfilled through Christ in us, namely in those in whom the Holy Spirit resides. God sent His son so that the righteousness required by the law could be fulfilled by Him in us. Please note that the text does not say that righteousness is fulfilled **through us**, but rather **in us**.

What does Paul say in Gal. 2:20 about his life? *“I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* Paul makes it clear that Christ is leading his life.

In Ezekiel 36:27 we are told by God: *“I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”*

Is it clear what this text means? God want to imbue us with His spirit and thus **He** will make us into people, who keep His commandments. This means that God will take care of our obedience through the Holy Spirit.

Here we see clearly that obedience takes place through the Holy Spirit and Christ in us. It is a heartfelt obedience. Without this fellowship we can only produce insufficient outward obedience.

“It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions.”⁸⁸

It may be that we want to keep God’s commands out of a sense of duty or because it is expected from us. *“The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely – because he is required to do so – will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within.”⁸⁹*

How can Christ live in us?

Remember: A relationship with Jesus begins with the first and complete surrender to Him. He answers with our spiritual rebirth (John 3:1-21). This new life given by God is maintained by a daily renewal of our relationship with Christ. This has to do with our daily consecration as well as with our daily request to be filled with the Holy Spirit – being refreshed by the Spirit. In this way Jesus lives in us. “...to be strengthened with might by his Spirit ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” (Eph. 3:16-17)

Examine yourselves, whether Christ lives in you

Scripture invites us to examine whether Christ lives in us. 2 Cor. 13:5 (NKJV): *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you?** – unless indeed you are disqualified.”*

God wants us to know our spiritual state. When are we disqualified or unfit? Since we become qualified through Christ in us, when we are

filled with the Holy Spirit, then being unfit is a life without being filled by the Holy Ghost. The Bible calls this a carnal mind.

When is our car “unfit”, or doesn’t run any longer? For instance if it has no fuel. What can we do? Either try to push it or purchase fuel. Of course, we will fill the car with fuel. Without Jesus in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, our obedience resembles someone trying to push a car.

Is it becoming more apparent how important Jesus is for our faith and life? Jesus is irreplaceable. *“He that hath the Son hath life.”* (1 John 5:12)

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

We need Jesus. Without Him we cannot be saved. We will have neither a fulfilled life here nor life in eternity.

Do you better understand how obedience is accomplished? We show our willingness to Jesus through our daily surrender and request for the Holy Spirit that He can accomplish obedience in us. We understand this well when we read 1 Cor. 1:30 (NKJV): *“But of Him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became **for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.**”*

All this Christ wants and can accomplish in us. And when it says that Christ became sanctification for us, then it clearly means that it happened so that we can live in obedience.

When are we saved?

Why is the answer to this question so important? When I am already saved, then it is clear that my obedience comes as a result of my salvation. It is not a prerequisite for my salvation. I am saved at the moment of my complete surrender to Jesus Christ. Eph. 2:8-9 says: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.**”*

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians he informed them that they were already saved. However, in Rom. 8:24 he writes: *“**For we are saved by hope.**”* We have the freedom to stay with God or not.

It is clear that after our salvation (by hope) that our main concern is to abide in Christ until the end of our lives or until His second coming. We were saved by faith (see Eph. 2:8). After that, it is necessary to stay in this faith. *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.”* (Col. 2:6) Thus the point is to remain in Christ through surrender. Dennis Smith writes the following about abiding in Christ:

⁸⁸ E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 58.1

⁸⁹ E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (1900), p. 97.3

*“Abiding in Him is not a work that we have to do as a prerequisite for our salvation. Rather it is our consent to letting Him do everything for us, in us and through us.”*⁹⁰

Why is our complete surrender necessary and what is it good for?

To come straight to the point: It has to do with our deliverance from the tyranny of our egos. Our ego is the cause of our problems. A proverb says: Every person’s greatest problem is themselves. Our ego is offended, hurt, upset, wants to assert its authority, is jealous, and so forth. The meaning of surrender is explained in more detail in the chapter “Surrender to Jesus” and clearly explained in the book “Steps to Christ”, chapter 5, Consecration.

*“God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must **yield ourselves wholly to Him....** He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. **He invites us to give ourselves to Him,** that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”*⁹¹

Life under the reign of our ego is a life of slavery to sin. Life with Christ in us is a life of glorious freedom for the children of God. Hence, it has to do with our surrender. A potter can only form the clay that is in his hands.

After our surrender comes abiding in Christ. And when we remain in Him, then salvation will continue through all eternity, however it will be in a completely new dimension after Jesus’ second coming.

Biblical obedience

Biblical obedience doesn’t have to do with either merits or with righteousness by works. It is a logical result of my trust in God, my surrender, my salvation, and my relationship to Christ. Biblical obedience of a reborn Christian, who is filled by the Holy Spirit, is nothing other than love to God, expressed in deeds. Obedience through the power of the

⁹⁰ Dennis Smith: 40 Days (vol. 2) – Prayers and Devotions to Revive Your Experience with God, (R&H 2011),35

⁹¹ E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p. 43.2, 43.4

Holy Spirit gives joy and delight as we can read in E. G. White:

*“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service.”*⁹²

It should be clear to us that we cannot be obedient by our own efforts. The Lord tells us about the people of Israel in “Patriarchs and Prophets”:

*“... they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law ...”*⁹³

We cannot observe God’s commandments in our own power. The secret of obedience is Jesus in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If a person really loves and trusts Jesus, if He lives in us through the Holy Spirit, then obedience brings great joy. When Jesus lives in us, then He ensures that we have His law in our hearts.

How does obedience through Jesus in us work?

Before we answer this question, let us look again at a relevant quotation from E.G. White: “He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.”⁹⁴

A miracle of obedience at the wedding

We all know the story of the wedding at Cana, where Jesus performed His first miracle. He turned water into wine, unfermented wine, which we would call grape juice today. What happened there? Mary, the mother of Jesus, heard that there was no more wine and informed Jesus. But Jesus did not react as she expected. Nonetheless, she assumed that Jesus would somehow help in this situation, because

⁹² E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p.668.3

⁹³ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*(1890), p.371.3

⁹⁴ E. G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 1st, 1890, par. 11

she said to the servants: “*Whatsoever He (Jesus) saith unto you, do.*” (John 2:5). Thus, Mary built up the confidence of the servants in Jesus. When Jesus finally said: “*Fill the water pots with water*”, they decided to do exactly that. Then He said: “*Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast*”; and they did it.

We want to notice the following: Since the servants had gained confidence in Jesus, they decided to obey His orders willingly. In other words, their willingness and decision were discernable steps to obedience – by doing what Jesus requested. Jesus turned water into a delicious drink. He performed His first miracle.

What were the individual steps?

- ▶ By her instruction Mary built up the servant’s trust in Jesus.
- ▶ The servants expressed their trust and willingness by doing what Jesus said.
- ▶ Neither Mary nor the servants had a part in turning water into wine. Jesus alone performed this miracle.

But would this miracle have happened without these preparatory steps? It is important that we trust Jesus, that we place our will and choices at His disposal and express this with steps to obedience. By doing so, Jesus—and Jesus alone—will perform this miracle. He alone also performs the miracle of obedience in us. This is how obedience of faith works. Jesus has been made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption for us (1. Cor. 1:30). Our decision to accept His will and our preparatory steps to obedience are the door openers for the miracle of obedience, which Jesus performs in our lives.

Collaboration between God and man

E. G. White’s statement in “Prophets and Kings” is very insightful:

*“While God was working in Daniel and his companions ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure’, they were working out their own salvation (Phil. 2:13). Herein is revealed the outworking of the **divine principle of co-operation**, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort ... **And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution.** Those who*

walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances... In His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty”⁹⁵

“The Lord designs that divine power shall cooperate with human effort.”⁹⁶ Mark Finley says: “Working together with God brings great joy and fulfillment.”

What part do we play? What part does Jesus have in us?

1. It has to do with our trust in Jesus, who works in us to will and to do. He creates in us an atmosphere of willingness and we will know what we have to do. But He waits for our decision.
2. It is our job to decide to do God’s will. Since God completely respects our personality and will, He can and will only intervene after we have made our decision. He waits for it.
3. It is our job to make our decision to trust in Jesus visible and to express it in our steps of obedience. These steps of obedience can differ greatly in magnitude. I will give some examples later.
4. God does the crucial part alone and He also supports us with our trust and preparation. But we shouldn’t forget that there is a big difference if my decision and steps of obedience are done in my own strength or if they are done in God’s strength. **My part is done in God’s strength when Jesus lives in me through the Holy Ghost.** This makes obedience a joy, whether in small things or great things.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (1917), p. 486.3-487.1

⁹⁶ E. G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (1995), Jan. 2nd, 10.2

⁹⁷ Mark Finley, *Decisions: Persuading People for Christ*

Questions

There are different opinions about who makes obedience possible. Some hold the view that obedience is the result of divine-human collaboration. Others say that God or Christ does it alone. So how does it work?

At the time of Jesus many people believed that it was enough to know the truth. In “The Desires of Ages” we read:

*“The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ’s day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness.”*⁹⁸

God does not expect us to passively endure His will, but rather He expects us to react to it, to be reactive. This means that with Christ in our hearts we make a positive decision and practically implement it. *“He [man] is elected to put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. He is elected to use the means God has placed within his reach.... He is elected to have faith continually.”*⁹⁹

*“Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation.... From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God.... Cooperation with Christ means a victory.... Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming.”*¹⁰⁰

When we include our decision and preparatory steps, then it is clear that this is a divine-human collaboration, although the preparatory steps are also taken in God’s strength, when Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit. To my knowledge, this is the correct point of view, since God totally respects man and doesn’t act without his consent. Man should show this consent through steps of obedience. It is clear that God does the crucial part. We need to see all the phases of such a process and hence see those involved (God and man) working together.

There is a good example of divine-human collaboration in the battle between Israel and Amalek in the desert (see Exodus 17:8-16). Joshua fought with his troops, but they were victorious because Moses prayed with the support of Aaron and Hur.

⁹⁸ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (1898), p. 309.2

⁹⁹ E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (1923), p. 453.5

¹⁰⁰ E. G. White, *A New Life* (1972), p. 38.4-39.1

DIFFERENT SIZES OF OBEDIENCE STEPS

Mary, mother of Jesus

When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary, she could only express her consent to God’s will. She said: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”* (Luke 1:38) Beyond that there was nothing she could do, except wait for God’s intervention. At this moment, it only had to do with her consent. This acceptance of God’s will brought great changes in her life and from a human point of view a high risk. As we can see, Mary lived in complete surrender.

The ten lepers

They cried: *“Master, have mercy on us.”* Jesus saw their faith and responded: *“Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.”* (Luke 17:13-14)

These men manifested their trust and their decision by immediately going. Jesus did not go for them. Were they healed by going? Certainly not! They were healed because Jesus healed them according to their trusting obedience. They had no part in their actual recovery. Nevertheless, their trust and the manifestation of their trust through steps of obedience opened the door for the miracle that Jesus performed for them. Jesus alone performed the miracle.

The healing of Naaman

Remember how Naaman was healed from leprosy. God’s instructions through Elisha were as follows: *“Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”* (2 Kings 5:10) Naaman was angry about this order. Only after he had been persuaded by his servants did he have enough trust to do it. God did not take over going to the Jordan and immersing himself in the water. After he dipped himself in the water the seventh time he was healed of leprosy. Did the seven immersions heal him? No! The steps of obedience he made as a result of his small faith, released God’s healing. We see again that small faith in God and steps of obedience led to God’s miracle.

Naaman had no part in this miracle. But without his preparatory steps nothing would have happened.

Rudi and Marie Anne Hirschmann

After World War II a young couple, who had just been baptized into the Adventist church, lived in a small town near Bad Aibling, Germany. Marie Anne was expecting their first child and had to quit her job as a schoolteacher for health reasons. In his search for a job, Rudi went daily to Munich for weeks on end, but in vain. Their savings melted away until they only had 6 Marks (the German currency at the time) left. In addition, they still had an envelope with money that belonged to God. It was their tithe money, which they had set aside. What should they do? Maria Anne said: Rudi, when our money is all gone we will be tempted to use God's money. So it would be best not to keep it at home. When you take the train to Munich tomorrow, take the money with you and bring it to the treasurer of the conference. So that's what he did. He brought it to the treasurer. She naturally asked Rudi how they were doing and he explained the situation. "Wait a moment", she said and made a phone call. Then she said: "I think we have found a job for you. Go to this address and ask for Mr. Bauer." A half an hour later Rudi was employed. This couple paid their tithe although they were financially broke. They manifested their faith by taking a step of obedience and God intervened at that moment.¹⁰¹

A tour company on the island of Guam

A couple, who owned a large tour company on the island of Guam, became Christians. The wife was baptized first and then the husband in January 2004. They very prayerfully prepared for Sabbath observation in their company. They cancelled all their services with hotels on Sabbath. The husband explained the reasons for these measures to travel agencies, hotels and sales agents. They responded that they would then have to give their business to the competition. His employees were afraid they would lose their jobs. This decision seemed like a death sentence for the company. But let's listen to what our brother has to tell:

¹⁰¹ Maria Anne Hirschmann *I changed Gods*, Predigtmappe #156 Helmut Haubeil

"I still remember the first Sabbath we closed. On Friday evening, we switched the answering machine on for the reservation calls. On the first Saturday we were closed, the weather unexpectedly changed and rain fell in torrents the whole day. In the evening we discovered that the answering machine was full of reservations for Sunday.

Over the next six months the weather held the same pattern: beautiful weather on Friday, torrential rain on Sabbath and beautiful weather on Sunday. God took care of us."

Our brother shared further miracles about honoring the Sabbath, which we cannot share for lack of space. (A full report about this experience is published in German in the MISSIONSBRIEF (mission letter) No. 40, March/April 2014.)¹⁰²

The brother and sister's part was trusting God and taking the preparatory steps. The miracles that followed could only be performed by God.

Let's remember this:

*"As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enabling."*¹⁰³ God has laid great blessing on obedience. Basically, obedience has to do with living out our trust in God and our surrender.

Why is obedience for our own good?

God designed it so that obedience is the best for us. Jeremiah 7:23 says: *"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."*

Any medical doctor would confirm that a remedy can only heal if it is conscientiously administered. This means that we must follow the doctor's instructions if we want to be healed. The best physician cannot help if his instructions are not properly followed.

This means that obedience is not only a logical consequence of my trust and surrender, but also obedience is for my best interest, since all God's commandments were given for our own good.

¹⁰² Steve Kasperbauer, *Gott ist treu* (Copyright Brigitte Kinder, Braunau/Austria 2013

¹⁰³ E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900), p. 333.1

How was it with the brass serpent (see Numbers 21:4-9)? When the people looked at the serpent as God commanded, then they were healed. Did turning their heads cause the healing? Of course not. They were healed because they showed their faith in God by looking at the serpent. God alone healed them. Obedience was for their own good.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...” (Hebr. 11:7) The construction of the ark was a result of Noah’s trust in God and he showed that his faith was genuine. He invested all his fortune and time into this construction. He certainly did not regret it. Wasn’t his obedience for his own good? He did not know beforehand, but he hoped. One thing is clear, the construction of this vessel was done through God’s guidance and power.

One-sided opinions

Unfortunately, today God’s ordinances are seen in a very unbalanced light. God’s law is only thought of in terms of commandments and often in a sense of restrictions, which have to be obeyed. However, God’s commandments are first and foremost promises for us. God’s laws show us what He can do in our life, when we are connected to Him by a trusting and loving relationship. God’s commandments are laws of blessings. Obedience is simply the mindset through which we can have divine wisdom and power for our daily concerns. When we see obedience from this perspective, then we lose our fear and see it as a joy.

Obedience, a gift from God

When Jesus produces obedience in us, then it means that obedience is a gift. If we see obedience as a gift, this helps to avoid two dangers: (1) the fallacy of “cheap grace” and (2) the temptation of legalism.

“Cheap grace” usually means that a person is saved, when they accept Jesus and no obedience is necessary, because the law has been abolished since we couldn’t keep it anyways. This is what carnal Christians believe. But in God’s power we want to and can obey. The intention to earn God’s kingdom is not only an ensnarement, but also – if taken seriously – a heavy burden.

When Jesus produces obedience in us in connection with our decision and desire, then we see that obedience is important and we will realize that it doesn’t have a meritorious character, because it was given to us as a gift.¹⁰⁴

Obedience is necessary as a result, as a fruit of our relationship with God and our salvation, but not a prerequisite. Everyone can come to Jesus without any prerequisites, just as he is. But no one can remain as he is. Or do we think that when a thief has been converted – saved – that he can continue to rob people?

Putting ourselves and our concerns into greater hands

It is important to let go of ourselves and our concerns and entrust them to God’s leading. We shouldn’t see ourselves as too important. This applies to every area. We shouldn’t hold anything back. Should I hold something back, when I can put it into much greater hands – God’s hands? Would that be smart?

If we want the Lord to care for us, to meet our needs, to protect us from our enemies, to lead us the best way, then it is logical that we have to follow His voice and to go the way He chooses for us.

Proverbs 3:5-6: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”*

We can understand this advice very well nowadays. Many car drivers use a navigation system today. We rely on the larger overview of the system. But that doesn’t mean that our reason has been deactivated. It is still needed. It is still our job to drive. But we are connected with a “leader” who has a greater overview and tells us where to turn, whether we should take a detour because of a traffic jam, whether we are driving too fast, etc. By God’s grace we can go through life with a “divine navigation system”. Therefore, it is important to rely with our whole heart on our wonderful heavenly guide and giver of reason. He promises to guide us correctly. He even vouches for it with His reputation. *“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”* (Psalm 23:3) Here obedience is also completely in our own interest.

¹⁰⁴ Sabbath School Quarterly, Standard Edition, March 31, 2011

How much obedience does God expect?

How much obedience does Jesus want to achieve in me? A little, a lot or completely?

There is a clear example in the life of Moses in Exodus 4:24-26. In the desert of Midian Moses was commissioned to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. *“On the way from Midian (to Egypt), Moses received a startling and terrible warning of the Lord’s displeasure. An angel appeared to him in a threatening manner, as if he would immediately destroy him. No explanation was given; but Moses remembered that he had disregarded one of God’s requirements; yielding to the persuasion of his wife, he had neglected to perform the rite of circumcision upon their youngest son.”* The youth was circumcised immediately. *“...the angel then permitted Moses to pursue his journey. In his mission to Pharaoh, Moses was to be placed in a position of great peril; his life could be preserved only through the protection of holy angels. But while living in neglect of a known duty, he would not be secure; for he could not be shielded by the angels of God.”*¹⁰⁷

The lesson to be drawn out of this incidence can be found in “Patriarchs and Prophets”:

*“In the time of trouble just before the coming of Christ, the righteous will be preserved through the ministrations of heavenly angels; but there will be no security for the transgressor of God’s law. Angels cannot then protect those who are disregarding one of the divine precepts.”*¹⁰⁸

Observing all God’s commandments is for our protection, our happiness and our wellbeing. We know that Adam and Eve had to leave Eden due to one single sin.

I think that this is a clear answer to the question of how much obedience God expects. It is understandable that the Lord expects obedience in all things, when we keep in mind that Jesus accomplishes this obedience in us and it is in our best interest. Jesus wants to accomplish the will of God in us, just as He did as a human here on this earth. His attitude as a human being was: *“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.”* (Psalm 40:8) He said to His disciples: *“I have kept my Father’s commandments.”* (John 15:10)

Moreover, if complete obedience brings complete happiness, life in abundance here and in eternity, then it is obvious that a decrease in

By following the divine laws – whether laws of nature, or spiritual laws – there are positive results for everybody. Even non-believers can experience positive results, if they observe these divine laws. I call this the natural blessing.

But a lot more happens, even miracles, when spiritual laws are followed. I call this the supernatural blessing.

Trust and obedience enrich each other. In James 2:22 we read: *“Seest thou how faith wrought with His works, and by works was faith made perfect?”* Trust in God fosters obedience, and obedience fosters our trust in God.

I would like to repeat an apt quote from Dennis Smith: “When someone lives in a close relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, then obedience comes naturally and from the heart, without giving it great thought.”¹⁰⁵

When we understand obedience correctly, then we will better understand the wonderful statements in the Psalms (especially Ps. 19 and 119) about God’s law. They show that salvation, redemption and the law belong together. A person, who is saved, will esteem God’s law and through their life in the Holy Spirit and Jesus in their hearts, they will gladly be obedient. I believe that a carnal Christian can’t even understand the statements in Psalm 119. Presumably, they would consider them an exaggeration. On the other hand, a spiritual Christian can empathize with what the psalmist wrote.

Growing in Obedience of Faith

God has told us: *“As we walk day by day in the light He sends us, in willing obedience to all His requirements, our experience grows and broadens until we reach the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Dennis Smith, *40 Days – Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming* (R&H 2009) p. 21, 22

¹⁰⁶ E. G. White, *Messages to Young People* (1930), p. 15.3

¹⁰⁷ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), p. 255.5

¹⁰⁸ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), p. 256.1

obedience means a loss of blessings. Everyone, who is and will be in God's kingdom, will joyfully obey God. This ensures love and harmony for all creatures.

Final thoughts

Jeremiah 7:23 summarizes this whole topic. These words were given to Israel while leaving Egypt. *“Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.”*

Here the Lord has given us a precious promise. What does He promise if we obey His word? ***“I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”*** But He adds that we have to go the whole way **for our own wellbeing**. We may use this text as a promise in a prayer for an obedient heart.

The apostle John

We can see the wonderful result of obedience of faith in the life of John, Jesus' disciple. In “Steps to Christ” we read:

*“Day by day his heart was drawn out toward Christ, **until he lost sight of self in love for his Master.** His resentful, ambitious temper was yielded to the molding power of Christ. The regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit renewed his heart. **The power of the love of Christ wrought a transformation of character.** This is the sure result of union with Jesus. When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven.”*¹⁰⁹

E. G. White wrote: *“The Lord has determined that every soul who obeys His word shall have His joy, His peace, His continual keeping power.”*¹¹⁰

It is my wish and my prayer that all believers persevere to experience the great joy of obedience of faith. May God bestow on us great victories in obedience of faith through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. *“...but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”* (1 John 2:17)

“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him... to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” (Psalm 103:17-18)

¹⁰⁹ E. G. White, *Steps to Christ* (1892), p 73:1

¹¹⁰ E. G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (1967), p. 53:4

Prayer

Father, thank you that in your infinite wisdom and through your tremendous skill you have appointed all your ordinances. You created everything in our best interest. I want to praise you and thank you for this. Please give me complete trust in your ways and help me to follow you with my whole heart in obedience in matters of faith.

Abide in Jesus

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*He who abides in Me, and I in him,
bears much fruit;
for without Me you can do nothing.*

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