**The True Witness to the Laodiceans**

**Background:**

Over the last several years I have had frequent exposure to the 1888 message. During this time, I have also observed how incredibly fast the world can change (COVID, Ukraine, inflation…). All this raised many questions in me about the end times and, specifically, **my preparedness for those times**. Although I will share a little bit about my walk, I mostly want to give you the benefits of my various readings from Ellen White, the Bible, and others. **I don’t claim to have the answers nor am I close to being ready for the Lord’s return. I definitely feel unworthy to stand before you today but, perhaps, we can learn from each other.**

**A question:**

The prophetic record is clear that the Lord wanted to return after the 1888 conference but could not because He could not find a people ready to receive the ladder rain nor bring His message of hope in the last days to the lost world. So, here’s the question: **don’t you think is absolutely imperative that we understand the issues so we do not repeat their mistakes and not be ready for the ladder rain?**

**Our Plan of Attack**

**Part 1-A**. A quick look at **Adventist history** and Ellen White’s writings in the years leading up to and following the 1888 conference. This includes Ellen White’s **identification of the problem** with the church that had to be fixed before Christ could use them to bring His last-day message.

**Part 1-B**. Christ’s **solution** to the problem which was the **Righteousness by Faith** message brought by Elder’s Jones and Waggoner which we will study shortly.

**Part 2-A**. A study of the ways the **Holy Spirit has operated in the past** including an Old Testament example, Pentecost, and a modern-day example. This includes an examination of the **character changes** in the lives of those receiving the Holy Spirit.

**Part 2-B**. **What are the implications for us** so we will be ready for the Lord’s return? Are we ready? If not, why not and what do we need to do?

**Note**: I can email my source file which has references footnoted.

**Prayer** [Not me but God to be seen and heard]

**Part 1-A - History**

1. Lord was looking to return in the mid 1800’s and needed a people ready to receive the ladder rain and to bring His last day message (later known as Righteousness by Faith and the Third Angel’s Message). Thus:
   1. Millerite Movement
   2. Great disappointment
   3. A prophet commissioned.
   4. Many prophetic words of warning and correction from the Lord via Ellen White.
2. Following great disappointment, church leadership drifted into **legalism, forms, rituals, and specific ways of presenting the message centered around the law.** The fire from the Millerite movement had faded and the church was largely **just going through the motions without the focus being on Christ**. Ellen White identified the problem as the people were in the **Laodicean** condition (Revelation 3:14-21) which we will examine in shortly.
3. **Prior to the 1888** conference, God was seeking to **turn the hearts** of the people back to Him and **prepare them to bring His Loud Cry** (the third angel’s message).
   1. **Calling of Jones and Waggoner**. Note the similarity between Ellen White in the 1888 era to John the Baptist in his day. Both were trying to turn the hearts of the people back to God and to repent of their sins.
      1. Ellen White’s early prophecy about the nature of the 1888 messengers:

“In the last solemn work few **great** men will be engaged. … But it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. …

“God will work a work in our day that but few anticipate. He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the outward training of scientific institutions. … God will manifest that He is not dependent on learned, self-important mortals.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

* + 1. Note that Waggoner and Jones developed their understanding of Righteousness by Faith independently then they met and worked together! This way, the Lord added credibility to the message and greatly strengthened the presentation as they worked together (“iron sharpen iron”).
  1. **Ellen White’s endorsement of the message**.

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Savior, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

* 1. **The conflicts of 1888** were no surprise to Ellen White as she was warned by God. Thus, she sounded warnings about the Laodicean condition, writing increasingly pointed articles for the year leading up to the conference.
     1. “The Laodicean message has been sounding. Take this message in all its phases and sound it forth to the people wherever Providence opens the way. Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world…[[3]](#footnote-3)”
     2. “I hope you will regard this [upcoming Conference] as a most precious opportunity to pray and to counsel together. …”

“It has been shown me that there are many of our ministers who take things for granted, and know not for themselves, by close, critical study of the scriptures whether they are believing truth or error. … Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring their hearts into close connection with God. …”

“It is one thing to give assent to the truth, and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth. We have been apprised of our dangers … and now is the time to take special pains to prepare ourselves to meet the temptations and the emergencies which are just before us. …” [[4]](#footnote-4)

* + 1. “While I was in Europe … I had also been told that the testimony God had given me would not be received. … A strong, firm, resistance was manifested by many against anything that should interfere with their own personal ideas.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
    2. “I have been awake night after night with [such] a sense of agony for the people of God, that the sweat would roll off from me. Some things fearfully impressive were presented to me. … I saw their different names and characters and sins that were written down. There were sins of every description—selfishness, envy, pride, jealousy, evil-surmising, hypocrisy and licentiousness, hatred and murder in the heart, because of this envy and jealousy. These sins were right among the ministers and people.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. **The 1888 Conference**.
   1. Jones and Waggoner’s message is covered shortly.
   2. Ellen White said that their message was the “Third angel’s message in verity…”.
   3. **Opposition** by leaders.
      1. Current leaders exhibited **pride** in their current position; anger that Jones and Waggoner were **non-seminary trained men**, and that these were selected to bring the message and **not them**. Also, they felt that the message did not conform to way it was always done before, concentrating on the law:

“When Jones and Waggoner came on the scene only a few years later and presented ideas that were perceived as going against the established doctrines, Butler and Smith felt confident that they should submit to the “brethren of experience.” But when Ellen White stood in defense of Jones and Waggoner and compared the work of [other] the leading brethren of the same rebellious spirit she had condemned [before] ..., it was more than they could handle. **They felt their views were infallible**.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Does this sound like the scribes and pharisees of Christ’s day?**

* + 1. This opposition opened a door to Satan to get many leaders to vigorously **oppose** the new message.
       1. **Many were lobbied** to accept these opposing views; lobbied by **conversations, letters, presentations, and by articles** in publications. Dan Jones was particularly driven to defeat the new message.

**Even today**, this opposition material is still being republished to prove that the church in 1888 did not reject the message and Christ was not trying to come. They seek to direct attention away from the truth about righteousness by faith and what happened in 1888. In order to sustain their position, these modern writers must ignore the great volume of evidence on Ellen White’s full support of Jones and Waggoner and their message. (See Ron Duffield’s books *Return of the Latter Rain* and *Wounded in the House of His Friends*.)

* + - 1. Since Jones and Waggoner stood for truth, the opposition, being unable to show any errors from scripture, began to fabricate falsehoods to malign the messenger’s characters and abilities. This continues today.
      2. *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”* (Matthew 23:13)

**[Questions?]**

**Part 1-B – Righteous by Faith vs. Righteousness by Works**

1. **Not Under the Law but Under Grace**. Every born-again Christian is no longer under law, but under grace [see Romans 6:14]. **So, what does this mean?**
2. **Under Law.**

“The law of God demands righteousness from all who are under its jurisdiction. But through transgression all have made themselves incapable of rendering the righteousness which the law demands. What, then, is the sinner to do? His transgression of God's righteous law has made him unrighteous. This has brought him under the condemnation of that law. Being condemned, the penalty of his transgression must be paid. The penalty is death. He owes a debt that demands his life. He is under a condemnation that he can never remove. He is facing a penalty he can never escape.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. **Under Grace.**
2. *“For He* ***made*** *Him who knew no sin* ***to be sin*** *for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* (II Corinthians 5:21). Not that Jesus had a sinful nature for then he would also need a savior. Instead, He **became sin** for us.
3. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast”.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)
4. *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that* ***the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us*** *who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:2-4)
5. **Righteousness by Works**.
   1. **Righteousness earned by our works.** The concept or idea that we have to earn our salvation that it either is **all up to** us or that we have to **add something** to what God has done.
      1. Many see this as God holding a **cosmic balance scale** and is putting our bad deeds on one side and our good deeds on the other side. If, in the end, our good side outweighs the bad side, we will be in heaven.
      2. Others who claim to understand grace still think that they need to **add something** to what God has done, particularly when feeling guilty of some sin.
   2. **“Once saved, always saved”.** Most in the evangelical world believe “once saved, always saved:” You can confess Christ and then live like a heathen which completely ignores Romans chapter 6. Note just verse 1.

*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.*

* 1. **I’m good enough.** There are many that think they are righteous enough and have no clue as to God’s claim on their lives. They forget that they have been bought with a price and are not their own (1 Corinthians 6:20). **This is the Laodicean condition!**
  2. **The Laodicean condition.** Let’s study the Laodicean condition, a variation on righteousness by works. Please turn to Revelations 3:14-18. **[Have read?]**

“*And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,* *‘These things say the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—****and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked****— 18I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”*

* + 1. Hot a cold refers to their spiritual condition
    2. Hot: ready to work in the Lord’s vineyard, having achieved righteousness by faith. This occurs when we abandon all hope for achieving any righteousness by our own efforts and throwing ourselves on the mercy of the Lord, believe, as did Abraham, that God will accomplish His word.
    3. Cold: Having no use for God;
    4. Warm: Think they have everything and need nothing so they are very hard to be reached. One more time, **those in Laodicea do not know they are Laodicean and are blind to their condition!** This is the most frightening and deadly condition to be in. Sometimes God will use a major event or crisis to shake us back to a proper understanding of our sinful nature.
    5. Rich, wealthy: in need of nothing: Pride rules thoughts and actions.
    6. Gold: **Saving faith** that fully understands righteousness by faith and that it is **all Christ**.
    7. Refined by fire: purified through testing; opening every nook and cranny to examination and purification by the Holy Spirit.
    8. Anoint Eyes: so that they can see our nakedness and condition
    9. White garments: righteousness of Christ

1. **Righteousness by Faith.**
   1. Illustration from A. G. Daniel’s *Christ Our Righteousness*:

“It is through faith in the blood of Christ that all the sins of the believer are canceled and the righteousness of God is put in their place to the believer's account. O, what a marvelous transaction! What a manifestation of divine love and grace. Here is a man born in sin. As Paul says, he is "filled with all unrighteousness". His inheritance of evil is the worst imaginable. His environment is at the lowest depths known to the wicked. In some way the love of God shining from the cross of Calvary reaches that man's heart. He yields, repents, confesses, and by faith claims Christ as his Savior. The instant that is done, he is accepted as a child of God. His sins are all forgiven, his guilt is canceled, he is accounted righteous, and stands approved, justified, before the divine law. And this amazing, miraculous change may take place in one short hour. ***This is righteousness by faith.***”***[[9]](#footnote-9)***

* 1. What God has done:
     1. God created us in order that His house would be full of a people that can and will **choose** to return His love and not be robots.
     2. Jesus took on Adam’s flesh after the fall [discuss]. He became part of the human race; He is our example; and He is our high priest.
     3. He was tempted *exactly as we are* but without sin in order to be the **perfect** sacrifice
        1. Paid our sins on the cross. In Him and with Him our old man suffers the second death.
        2. Now He is our “elder brother” and our high priest who understands all our struggles.
     4. “*And Abraham believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*.” (Genesis 15:6)
  2. When we hear God’s promises, Christs gives us His faith to believe Him. Then we confess and repent of our sins, and accept Him as Lord of our lives. Note that it is through the faith **of** Jesus that we are saved.

**Not only is salvation freely offered as a gift, Christ gives us His faith so we can believe!**

22*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith* ***of*** *Jesus Christ …25Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare* ***His*** *righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God…* (Romans 3:22, 25)

Praise God for His indescribable gift.

* 1. **Justification.** The best explanation of justification is in A. G. Daniel’s book.

“The sole reason why they [people] cannot believe that God justifies them, is that they are ungodly, so ungodly. If only they could find some good in themselves, or if only they could straighten up and do better, they might have some courage to hope that God would justify them. Yes, they would justify themselves by works, and then profess to believe in justification by faith! [Pause for reaction…]

“But that would be only to take away all ground for justification; for if a man can find good in himself, he has it already, and does not need it from anywhere else. If he can straighten up and do better of himself, he does not need any justification from anywhere else.

“It is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to say that I am so ungodly that I do not see how the Lord can justify me. For if I am not ungodly, I do not need to be made righteous: I am righteous. There is no half-way ground between godliness and ungodliness.

“But when a person sees himself so ungodly and finds there no possible ground of hope for justification, it is just there that faith comes in; indeed, it is only there that faith can possibly come in.

“For faith is dependence on the word of God only. So long as there is any dependence on himself, so long as there is any conceivable ground of hope for any dependence upon anything in or about himself, there can be no faith; so, there is no place for faith, since faith is dependence on "the word only."

“But when every conceivable ground of hope of any dependence on anything in or about himself, is gone, and is acknowledged to be gone; when everything that can be seen is against any hope of justification, then it is that, throwing himself on the promise of God, upon the word only, hoping against hope, faith enters; and by faith he finds justification full and free, all ungodly though he be.

“For forever it stands written, *‘To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.’* (Romans 4:5)

1. Do **you** begin to see how easy it is to have our thinking (and then our actions) begin to slip into a works mentality? **Satan has a slippery shoe and he wants to slip it on you!** It is ever Satan’s ploy if he cannot get us to commit a major sin, he will try to get us into a works mentality. [Discuss]
2. **Review.** [ask and read answers if unsaid]
   1. What is **Grace.** Unmerited favor, blessings undeserved. *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Romans 5:8.
   2. What is **Faith:** [Have turn to Luke 7:1 (Centurion’s faith) and Paraphrase, noting in particular verse 7]

A. T. Jones: Faith is the expecting that the word of God will accomplish what that word says; **and** depending upon *the word only* to accomplish what the word says.

Paul: *“… the substance (realization) of things hoped for, the evidence (confidence) of things not seen.”*

* 1. **Whose** Faith**?** The faith **of** Jesus.
  2. **Justification.** A right standing before **all** of God’s laws, **as if we had never sinned**. *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have* ***peace*** *with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:1)
  3. **Righteous.** To be holy, pure, without spot or blemish. Holy just as God is holy. Righteousness is the opposite of sin. “Be ye holy as I am holy.” To be like Christ **in God’s eyes**.
  4. Is it all God’s grace or can we add something to it?
  5. **Who is the source of all good things?**

*“For I know that in me (that is my flesh) nothing good dwells* …” (Romans 7:18)

*Every good gift and every perfect gift are from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning…* (James 1:17)

**Think of the utter insanity of a created being thinking he can add something to His creator, as if God needed something. Can you see it? This is nothing more than unmitigated pride! Satan’s sin; thinking he could have any thoughts, ideas, plans that were better than God’s. That is why pride is listed as the number one thing God hates.**

1. **Righteousness by works doesn’t work!** Attempting righteousness (salvation) by works is an absolute insult to our blessed redeemer! So, why do we do it? Is it not because Satan whispers in our ears and we listen to him? Consider Eve in front of the tree of knowledge; what was Satan’s appeal to her? (Pride). Here are a few examples of being in a works mentality. I know that I have had most of these at various points in my life. As we look at these, ask yourself if you have been guilty any of these on occasion.
2. We are proud of our accomplishments.
3. We are unable to accept correction from others.
4. We become bound to our leadership positions or status symbols.
5. I think my sins are too bad, too severe for God to forgive me.
6. We compare ourselves to others like the pharisee and the tax collector: “Lord, I thank You that I’m not like this…”
7. To feel good about ourselves, we judge others, their actions, the way they look, etc.
8. We tattle about sins or perceived sins in someone else’s life (gossip).
9. When we commit a bad sin, we think that we have to do some good before the Lord will hear our prayers. Alternately, we wait to confess until the memory and pain subsides.
10. We get proud of our works. God created the works before time in which we are to walk in (Ephesians 2:10).
11. When We think in our heart “I’m doing ok, I’m keeping my nose clean.” (**Laodicean condition**)
12. **Ellen White on the Third Angel’s Message:** [With emphasis]

When Ellen White was asked if the message of righteous by faith was the Third Angel’s message. To this she replied: “it is the third angel’s message in verity”!! She indicated that **righteousness by faith** is the message we are to take to the world with great power (Revelation 18:1) and the outpouring of the Latter Rain. This message is to bring the time of refreshing from the Lord. It is the message that salvation is all God and He offers His perfect righteousness in exchange for all our sins. Full and free. **Praise God, AMEN.** Christ took the penalty that we deserve so we might have the life he deserves.

**Summary**

We can contribute *nothing* towards our salvation except to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and sanctify us. We simply let the Lord be the Lord of our life. Let’s let Christ drive the truck so we can stay out of the ditch!

\* [We need to have unanimity here! Questions? Try for Q&A and allow to run as long as needed]

***8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast.*** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Hymn 598 – Watch Ye Saints

**Benediction:**

*23Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify us completely; and may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

*24Now to Him who is able to keep us from stumbling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.* (Jude 24-25).

AMEN!

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**Part 2-A – The Work of the Holy Spirit and the Ladder Rain**

1. First a few quotes from Ellen White to motivate us for our journey:
   1. "While the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the 'latter rain,' or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out." [[10]](#footnote-10)
   2. "I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfilment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere, as he cried mightily, with a strong voice. ... The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message, as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message."[[11]](#footnote-11)
   3. “There is nothing that **Satan fears** so much than that the people of God shall clear the way by removing **every hindrance**, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**“The culmination of all these events is a united people, fearlessly proclaiming the third angel's message.”**[[13]](#footnote-13)

1. Let’s start our preparation to stand in this time by examining at God’s special call to Isaiah (Isaiah 6).Note that Isaiah is **already a prophet of God**.
   1. Close your eyes and try to imagine the word picture as I describe it. For visualization purposes, let’s suppose that Isaiah has just finished his morning prayers and is sitting in the dark as he considers all the things to do that day. Things like giving water to the livestock, fixing the thatch roof, and meeting with a couple of priests from the temple. Suddenly, he hears the sound of beautiful singing and feels a great sense of peace. Then the room explodes with light and he is transported in spirit to the very throne room of God.

*1In the year that King Uzziah died,* ***I saw the Lord*** *sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” 4And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.*

*5So I said: “****Woe is me****, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.” 6Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips;* ***Your iniquity is taken away****, and your sin purged.”*

*8Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” 9And He said, “****Go****, and tell this people:”* (Isaiah 6:1-8)

* 1. Some thoughts:

1. “…**train** of his robe…”: In Isaiah’s day, the size of the train of the king’s robe spoke to the king’s **majesty and power**. God is simply helping Isaiah se God’s greatness using things he understands.
2. “Woe is me for I am undone.” God has said that no man can see God and live.
3. “…a man of unclean lips … in the midst of a people of unclean lips…”: What is this [pause]. **Confession** of his sins **and** the sins of the people.
4. “…your sin purged.”: **Forgiveness**
   1. Note the sequence here: **Isaiah sees God** as God is, righteous, holy, and pure; then he **sees himself** (particularly his sins) as God sees him; then he **confesses** of his sins; **forgiveness** is given; and, finally, he is **called**. This is can occur to us in **dramatic ways** as at salvation or at times of revival, repentance and spiritual renewal! It can also occur in **small ways** when we respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting about faults, sins, etc. that need to be removed from our lives (times of sanctification).
5. **The Two Phases of the Giving of the Holy Spirit.** We shall look at how the Holy Spirit was working prior to the powerful outpouring described in Acts 2. This is the Upper Room experience which we will examine shortly. Similarly, the Holy Spirit will move in God’s people’s lives **to ready them** for the times of trouble and the Lord’s second return. At this time, there will be a **dramatic outpouring** as described in Revelation chapter 18.
   1. **The initial impartation.** 
      * As seen above in Isaiah’s example, the **Holy Spirit** is poured out in a measured way. God allows Isaiah to see God in all His glory and then to see himself **as God sees him.** In this first phase God has to plow the furrows of the heart to purify the vessel before He commissions the worker.
      * After Jesus resurrection and prior to His ascension, Jesus gave the disciples a lesser impartation of Holy Spirit in order to cleanse and prepare them for the soul searching of the upper room.

*19Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews* … *21So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 22And when He had said this,* ***He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit****…* (John 20:19, 21)

*44Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45****And He opened their understanding****, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.* (Luke 24:44-45)

This soul cleaning process continued for 10 days in the upper room, (between the Jesus’ ascension and Pentecost). Here, the Holy Spirit opened their minds to remember and understand the scriptures and to see their sins and their character as God sees them.

* 1. This initial impartation will also happen prior to the final outpouring of the ladder rain as God’s people are readied for His work. This is the **second impartation.** Once all have their vessels cleaned and the disciples will be of **“one mind and one heart”,** God will issue their full call, and pour out the Holy Spirit in great power like in Acts 2 but in a much greater and powerful way.

1. **A Before and after look at the former rain** starting with the after.
   1. **After**

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place* (upper room)*.2 and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4).*

It is estimated that there were 120 people in the upper room. Then all speak God’s word with **great power**, **authority**, and in other **languages** as the spirit gave the utterance. From Peter’s first sermon 3,000 souls were saved for the kingdom!!!

* 1. **Before**. But what were these great evangelists like before? How would describe the character flaws of the disciples before the cross? [pause] What about the sailors, Peter and the “sons of thunder”? Peter’s knee jerk” reactions, by putting his mouth in motion before his brain was in gear. Consider Peter’s denial of Christ or the 11 scattering at Jesus’ arrest. A motley crew to say the least. How about James’ and John’s offer to call down fire from heaven and destroy a whole town? Here are two more examples from scripture:

*20 Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”* (Matthew 20)

Do you think that the boys might have been behind their mother’s request? Here’s one more:

*33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.* (Mark 9:33-34)

So, what caused this dramatic change? Let’s become a fly on the wall during the 10 days in the upper room chart some before and after personality traits. From these we can see some examples of changes God intends for us to ready us for the full outpouring of the Latter Rain…

1. **Chart of disciples before and after the upper room.** The after in the chart below could be summarized as having “the mind of Christ” (see Philippians 2:3-8).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Change in the disciples lives as a result of the upper room experience** | |
| **Before** | **After (The Mind of Christ)** |
| Fearful (they all ran from garden; Peter’s denial) | Bold, no fear even before Sanhedrin.  Wearing the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6).  Peace from God |
| Prideful, self-centered. | Humble, focused on God first, others then self.  Love for **all**, wanting their salvation and their best. |
| Prejudiced against all non-Jews (“Shall we call down fire…?”) | Inclusive; accepting message going to Gentiles.  However, the change was not right away (Acts 10). |
| Rugged individualists.  Desire to be top dog. | Team players totally surrendered to God’s will.  Distrustful of self with deep sense of unworthiness. |
| Brash, speak before thinking (like Peter) | Calm, God directed |
| Casual about their relationship with God | Intentional about staying ready (see **The Shaking**) |
| Poor/improper understanding of scripture (expecting the wrong kind of messiah). | Seemingly near-perfect understanding and knowledge of scripture including its application to the messiah and salvation. This is a miracle as none of them had extensive schooling on the scriptures. |

From the **after** column in the chart we see some character traits that the Holy Spirit needs to form in us to make us vessels worthy of carrying the last day message. To be ready, we must be purified of sin and become **of one mind and heart**.

How do we do that? Can we do it in our own effort? NO! Can we “fake it until we make it.” NO! It is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, there is much we have to do to facilitate and hasten the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. **A recent example of initial Holy Spirit impartation.**

Even after the 1888 rejection, the Lord found a group of teachers and students in 1892 that were open to the Holy Spirit. The following quotes are from **W. W. Prescott**. Which I found in Ron Duffield’s book “Wounded”.

As the week of prayer neared its end, Battle Creek College held its final chapel meeting before winter break. During the morning prayer service, W. W. Prescott [president of college], who had just returned to campus from his travels out West, felt a deep conviction that he needed to make a statement of confession for some matters in his past. Standing before the student body, Prescott read a short portion from recent Testimonies received: “Breaking down in tears even as he read, the conscientious Prescott frankly confessed his past diffidence in responding to the ‘new light’—righteousness by faith.” Even though he had repented a year earlier that he had not been as forthright in accepting the Minneapolis message, he now was moved to go even deeper in his repentance.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Prescott later shared that he had never known of a similar experience: “Such a sense of our utter sinfulness, our wretchedness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the need of that help which comes through accepting Christ and His fullness, seemed to rest upon all hearts. **Personally, I have nev­er known such horror of sin as took hold upon me that day, and others felt the same way.**” As a result of Prescott’s tearful confession, again the student body was moved and “although vacation was supposed to begin that after­noon, the meeting continued until six p.m.” Confessions were made by both teachers and students, “and the Spirit of God was present to witness to the character of the work.” After a break of an hour and a half, “the confession and testimony [ time] resumed again, finally ending at 10:15 p.m.” Yet Prescott was adamant that “there was nothing like a fanatical outbreak or anything to bring a reproach upon the cause of God. Everyone recognized it as the work of the Spirit, which while it convinced of sin, was still a Comforter.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Confession and repentance! The old man successfully crucified (Galatians 2:20)! Bad ways gone and replaced with good. They are now a people on fire. **This was what the Lord intended for all attendees of the 1888 conference** and the preceding ministerial meeting including staff, workers and church members**. The Lord needs a total dying to self, a complete focus shift from self to God.** Should that have been accomplished, they could not but have spoken with great power the wonderful things that God had done for them!God intended for sins to be confessed and all hearts yielded to Him. Once the refiner’s fire had refined the witnesses, then, the strong angel of Revelation 18 would have been able to sound his trumpet through them so they could stand during the plagues. This fire would have spread until the gospel of this kingdom was be preached to all the kingdoms and then the Lord would have returned.

**Questions?**

**Part 2-B – A call to holiness, to be ready for the Lord’s return!**

**Soul searching questions:**

* + - **What are we to do as individuals or as a church while we wait for the latter rain and Christ’s return? Do we just sit around and wait? Is there something we should be doing to prepare? If so, what?** [pause]
    - **Is the “True Witness to the Laodiceans” addressed to me? To you? Do I think that I have no need of anything and that my faith is good enough?**
    - **Is the church unified? Are we regularly lifting each other up in prayer? Are we willing to be held accountable by others? Are we willing to encourage others in their walk?**
    - **Is our number one objective to lift up Christ both within the church and in our daily lives?**
    - **Is God first in our lives?**

[pause; judge audience and if necessary, camp here.]

1. **Individual efforts.** It seems that the work must start with us individually. This is the process of sanctification.
   1. **Are we in Laodicea?** Are we just comfortably going through the motions of religion, thinking we are “good enough?” Ellen White said the church as a whole was in Laodicea. In my life, I have found that it’s an easy place to end up, particularly **if I are not extremely intentional** about my walk with God. This is one of the reasons you are hearing this message: I was fat, dumb, and happy in the church and I began realized that I was “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked…”.
   2. **Should we not pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit and be sensitivity to it. Should we pray more?** Individually, in small groups, and as a church body?

*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him*!”*!* (Luke 7:13)

* 1. Should we not daily **search our hearts** with the Holy Spirit ‘s help to identify character flaws, sins, stinking thinking, and any other kind of evil? When these areas are identified, we must yield to His leading. This process may seem painful but we can **rejoice** that God has not given up on us. We can **submit joyfully to the discipline** of the Lord (see Romans 12) because we can be confident that **the Holy Spirit knows what He is doing**.

This effort is not salvation by works; it is not an attempt to earn salvation. Instead, it is working with the Holy Spirit as ***He*** purifies us for ***His*** work.

Changes directed by the Holy Spirit may well require a **major sacrifice**. Consider the rich young ruler that left Jesus sorrowful because he loved his stuff more than eternal life. Consider also the pharisees that believed in Jesus but would not confess Him because they **loved the praise of men rather than God**. Really? Wow. This speaks of the power of Satan to deceive and control our lives.

* 1. We need to learn how to listen for the Holy Spirit’s prompting during our day-to-day activities. Practice trying to think briefly before responding when confronted by any challenge (like Nehemiah’s quick prayer when king asked him “what is your request?” Also, when you are hit with an **impure thought from Satan**, confront it instantly with scripture. “It is written…”.
  2. The apostle Paul recommends that we **fill our minds** with **scripture** and other **good thoughts** (Philippians 4:8). This means reading the Bible and Ellen White, listening to sermons … Ellen White says it best. **[Emphasize]**

“Let everyone who claims to believe that the Lord is soon coming, search the Scriptures as never before; for Satan is determined to try every device possi­ble to keep souls in darkness, and blind the mind to the perils of the times in which we are living. Let every believer take up his Bible with earnest prayer, that he may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to what is truth, that he may know more of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Search for the truth as for hidden treasures, and disappoint the enemy. The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun…[[16]](#footnote-16)

“When the people of God individually seek for his Holy Spirit with all the heart, there will be heard from human lips the testimony that fulfills that word, ‘I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory.’”[[17]](#footnote-17)

* 1. **Live a life of praise and thanksgiving! “…**rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in all things give thanks for this the will of God concerning you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

* 1. Sing songs and make melody in your heart.
  2. Remove all negative from our thoughts or speech (both what we say to ourselves and others). **Negative thoughts yield ground** in our hearts to the enemy! We must **never** give Satan a **foothold** by negative words or thoughts.

1. **Group efforts.** Are there appropriated church-wide or group activities that should be examined? These might be new activities or procedures or modifications to existing activities. Here are a few items to guide our thinking:
   1. "A work **is to be accomplished** in the earth similar to that which took place at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the days of the early disciples, when they *preached Jesus and Him crucified.* Many will be converted in a day; for the message will go with power."[[18]](#footnote-18)
   2. **Early Church**. We read from Acts: “they were all with **one accord** in one place.” And again: “So, continuing daily with **one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with **gladness** and **simplicity of heart**,**praising God**…”. We are talking about joy, unity, love for God and others. This all resulted from the Holy Spirit’s prior work in the upper room and then the former rain.
   3. **Your thoughts on the 10-day prayer meeting in upper room?** [Pause]
   4. **Some of my thoughts:**

In the upper room, I hear a lot of “do you remember when Jesus said this or did this and how we responded. “We were so stupid.” I see lots of soul searching as they really understood the scriptures for the first time. I hear lots of sincere prayers of confession not just to God, but to each other for their sinful attitudes, pride, actions, and words. Each experienced what Isaiah experienced. That is, being completely humbled before God and each other.

I also see lots of tears as they realize the opportunity that they had missed. Lots or “if only we had really understood Whom we were walking with.” I see “self” dying on the cross as they realized it was not about them at all and that they, of all people, were infinitely blessed by having been chosen for such an incredible job as apostles to the God of the universe. I see recognition of the immense responsibility that lay before them. There must have been many questions and wonder about what lay ahead. I see apostles and others each with their own aspirations, viewpoints, etc. being molded into a totally united team, “of one mind and heart.”

**After the 10 days, they were being made ready for Pentecost, the receipt of the full anointing of the Holy Spirit for their future work.**

1. **Review.** We have seen that there are two phases of the Holy Spirits impartation. Prior to the upper room experience just before Pentecost, we saw the Lord appear to the disciples behind locked doors and breathe on them. Recall also the Lord’s special call to Isaiah.

So, what are your thoughts as you look at this church as compared to the early church (and especially their upper room experience)? Anyone?

**Note** again that we cannot accomplish the results of the disciples’ upper room experience by our own efforts!!! We cannot control when the Lord will choose to pour out the latter rain. However, we can work with the Holy Spirit to achieve love, unity, sanctification, joy, peace, etc. now in our lives and in this church.

1. Your turn to speak. Any thoughts [pass around the Mic’s so all can hear]
2. **A Final Thought.** What follows are two quotes from W. W. Prescot from 1892 that speak to the heart changes we may need. He was speaking to issues his day when the righteousness by faith message was rejected by many of the church leaders. However, it seems to apply to us this day because the Lord’s return appears to be on the horizon. Listen carefully as this is read.

I don’t know what it will take, I am sure, but it seems to me some­times that there will be something to awaken us to the way that God looks at sin, and the way he looks at us. But we have refused the warning of the Spirit, and the instruction that he has sent, and the testimonies that he has sent us again and again right on this point: “Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.” For years this has been the warning, repent! repent! repent! But we have not heeded this testimony, but have come to that point where we say: “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” And yet I say that if ever there was a needy company, it is this company.…

Now I am perfectly aware that I am speaking with great plainness, and I do not speak this without thought and prayer. I speak what I be­lieve to be the message of God to our souls, mine and yours. I say that it is time for us to be zealous and repent that God’s special outpouring of his Spirit may come upon us without destroying us. If we don’t make this matter a matter of earnest prayer, **I say it simply means death to you and to me.…**

We cannot come to this assembly, this institute and Conference and go day after day in an easy-going manner. It is time for everyone to be trembling in earnest for his own soul’s salvation.… There is an individual work for every one of us to do in connection with this gathering, and that means solemn heart-searching before God, taking his word and repent­ing, that we may receive this power.…

I enjoy the seasons of coming together, and of listening to these in­structions, and the explanation of God’s word. This I enjoy very much. But I tell you, we might come and go here, week in and week out, year in and year out, and yet not meet the mind of God concerning this time. **[[19]](#footnote-19)**

I have no disposition to try to crowd anyone, but I feel that it is my duty to present these things in the plainest manner possible, and to let the Spirit of God do its own work upon our hearts. That is all I can do.… Why, I tell you the simple fact when I say that if God would tonight let some additional rays of his Spirit shine in our hearts, we could not go home and rest easy, and sleep quietly, and take matters the same as usual.[[20]](#footnote-20)

***If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.***

(II Chronicles 7:14)

***Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.***

(Jeremiah 29:12-13)

**Hymn 214**

**Benediction:**

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctifyyou completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God grant His peace and wisdom to this church as we anticipate the Lord’s soon return.*

**Amen**!

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies,* vol. 5, pp. 80, 82 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, Letter 57, May 1, 1895; in *Testimonies to Ministers*, 91, 92, and *1888 Materials*, 1336. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, Letter 24, Sept. 19, 1892; in *1888 Materials*, 1051-1054. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ellen G. White *1888 Materials,* pp. pp. 38-41, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ellen G. White Manuscript 2, Sept. 7, 1888, “Engaging in Worldly Speculation”; in *1888 Materials,* pp. 47, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ellen G. White to Mary White, Letter 82, Nov. 4, 1888; in *1888 Materials,* p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Duffield, *Return of the Ladder Rain*, vol 1, page 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Arthur G. Daniells* Christ Our Righteousness, page 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ibid,* page 19 (A. G. Daniel) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ellen G. White, "Early Writings," pages 85, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, page 277 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ellen G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” *Review and Herald,* March, 22, 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A. G. Daniels, “Christ Our Righteousness,” page 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ellen G. White, “Diary,” Manuscript 54, Dec 30, 1890; in *1888 Materials*, 787. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. W. W. Prescott, “The Work at Battle Creek College,” Dec. **1892**; in Document File 256, Ellen G. White Estate, Loma Linda Branch Office; Ron Graybill, “A.D. 1892: Revival Comes to Michigan,” *Insight,* March 30, 1971, 6, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ellen White, Nov. 22 1893 Review and Herald. (Quoted in Wounded 105) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. General Conference Daily Bulletin #5, February 5, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The Review and Herald, November 29, 1892. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. W. W. Prescott, “The Promise of the Holy Spirit, No. 2,” General Conference Daily Bulletin, Jan. 31, 1893, 65-67. (Quoted in Wounded 100) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. W. W. Prescott, “The Promise of the Holy Spirit, No. 3,” General Conference Daily Bulletin, Feb. 2, 1893, 104, 105. (Quoted in Wounded 102) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)