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## The Difference of Love, Joy, and Peace (The President's Desk)

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Roy E. Gane

“**B**ut the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NKJV).<sup>1</sup>

After reading Acts 1–2, we would expect the fruit of the Spirit to be power for witness to God. Jesus promised His followers just before He ascended to heaven: “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). On the day of Pentecost, Christ’s gift of the Spirit came with a roaring sound like rushing wind, tongues of fire, and miraculous ability to speak messages from God in unlearned languages (2:2-4). This was partial fulfillment of Joel’s prediction that God’s people would convey revelations from Him (Joel 2:28-32).

Though we cannot see the Spirit, we can discern the influence of His divine presence (John 3:8). In that

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sense the Spirit is like “wind” (same word for both in Hebrew and Greek). As wind can be forceful, so can the Spirit. Thus the Spirit impelled

and empowered ancient Israelite deliverers to defeat powerful oppressors.

But Elijah learned that God’s presence can also come quietly and gently. When the Lord passed by him, there was a Category 5 tornado force wind that ripped into the mountains and split rocks like an invisible jackhammer. Cowering and attempting to shelter himself from flying debris, Elijah expected God to step out of the wind. But the Lord was not in the wind any more than a freight train is in the rush of air that results from its passing by.

Then the prophet was jolted by a seismic shudder as a violent earthquake grated its way up the Richter scale. But the Lord was not in this phenomenon any more than a brontosaurus was in the shaking caused by its footsteps.

Next Elijah started to sweat from

the blazing heat of a roaring fire. Surely God would be in the fire, as He was in the burning bush that appeared to Moses, the pillar of fire that guided and protected the Israelites at night, and the display of glory that attended His proclamation of the Ten Commandments. But the Lord Himself was not in this fire any more than a rocket is in the fire that follows it.

After the fire there was a “still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:12, 13). The implication is that God was in the still small voice, the gentle whisper.

Unlike forces such as wind, earthquakes, and fires, a voice comes from a person and communicates from one mind to another. Such personal communication is so basic to the divine-human relationship that Christ is called the “Word” (John 1). Powerful displays of impersonal forces can play an important role by getting our attention, but we must then keep listening and tune in to a lower decibel level in order to hear what is really important: God’s “still, small voice.”

God’s voice gave Elijah instructions for what he was to do. But there is another dimension of transfer from God’s mind to ours. Not

only do we need directions to guide our actions and thoughts, we also need attitudes in harmony with God’s attitudes. Attitudes are the source of more specific thoughts and of actions. Without God’s attitudes, we cannot do what He asks us to do, even if we want to.

This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. As God’s voice gently transferred a message to Elijah, so the Spirit teaches us. But the Spirit does more: He quietly pours God’s love into the hearts of those who receive Christ by faith. Love is the all-embracing, foundational attitude of God’s eternal relational character and the over-arching principle of His will as conveyed to us in Scripture. Love is the mother of all virtues and never comes without its children. So the “fruit of the Spirit” is not only love, but also “joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

We receive the Holy Spirit from Christ, where He is now. After Jesus rose from the dead, He breathed on His disciples in order to give them the Holy Spirit so that they could represent Him to the world. But when Christ ascended to heaven and began ministering as High Priest in God’s heavenly temple, He gave the Spirit in much fuller measure.

Now Christ is carrying out the final phase of atonement, which is headquartered in the heavenly

equivalent of the holy of holies. So that is where we need to go by faith to receive the Holy Spirit from Christ. Ellen G. White recognized this and saw that those who do not follow Christ there, as if He were still engaged in an earlier phase of salvation at a throne outside the most holy place, miss out on the gift of the true Spirit: "There [in the holiest part of the heavenly temple] I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, 'My Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace."<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the two groups is that those who follow Jesus all the way receive the fruit of the Spirit. Satan can counterfeit light and power, which gives the impression of the Spirit. But Satan would not want to give love, joy, and peace even if he could because he is opposed to these attitudes. If he can get people to believe that they have the Spirit when they really do not, they will fail to recognize their lack and will live in harmony with Satan's character. Satiated with spiritual junk food, they will die of starvation for real nutrition from heaven. Without love, joy, and peace, they

will also disrupt unity and happiness in the "Christian" community and thereby give God a bad name.

Seventh-day Adventists uniquely believe that Christ is presently carrying out the last stage of atonement in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. So we, of all people, know where to receive the Holy Spirit from Christ, where He is ministering right now. Therefore, we should see an overflowing of love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit in our lives, congregations, and organizations. These attitudes, which foster heavenly unity among God's true people, witness to the truth and presence of Christ like nothing else. They provide the kinds of relational reconciliation for which the world craves, and which prepare people for Christ's second coming—reconciliation by an end-time equivalent to Elijah.

So what do we actually see in our lives, congregations, and organizations? Do we see warmth or coldness, tenderness or harshness, patience or paranoia, Christlikeness or criticism, true unselfishness or toxic, ungenerous self-promotion at the expense of others? The list of contrasts could go on and on. It is not particularly disturbing to see these words by themselves and savor their rhetorical effect. But when we attach to them names, dates, and faces, especially our own, the picture darkens and we cry out with Isaiah: "So I

said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man [or woman] of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips'" (Isa. 6:5).

Yes, the Holy Spirit is active among us, and we praise God for that. But a key effect of the Spirit is to make us thirst for more of Him by convicting us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Intellectually, we know the wonderful doctrine of where to receive the Spirit from Christ. But this doctrine will make a difference in our lives only as it guides our experience. Knowing the

location of water is crucial, but we die of thirst unless we go there and actually drink.

Let us daily go to the Source and drink deeply of the Spirit through prayer, not only talking to God, but waiting in silence and faith for His presence and influence. He is eager to fill us not only with His kind of light and power, but also with love, joy, and peace!

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> All Bible texts in this article are quoted from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56.

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