

HOW THE

H o l y
S p i r i t

WORKS

IN BELIEVERS' LIVES TODAY

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Foreword by Eugene Merrill, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament,
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For emphasis some words or phrases in certain quotations have been made bolder than ordinary.

Other translations of this book:

Chinese

Spanish

Revised edition, October, 2002

Other books by Dr. Lin

Genesis A Biblical Theology

The Kingdom and What It Means to the Life of the Believer

The Secret of Church Growth

EUGENE H. MERRILL: “In this delightful treatise Dr. Lin makes a powerful argument for the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of modern believers and the need for them to be open to what He would do in and through them. He clearly articulates the differences among baptism, filling and fullness of the Spirit and shows how each is essential to the Christian who would enjoy a life of victory and effectiveness.”

Eugene Merrill, Ph.D., is Distinguished Professor of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

LESLIE M. FRAZIER: “This book is characterized by thoroughness, clarity and simplicity. Dr. Lin, with his language expertise, spiritual insight and many years of experience in Christian ministry, has given the Christian public a very useful tool to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. The baptism, filling and fullness of the Holy Spirit are clearly presented. The filling and fullness of the Holy Spirit are so necessary to accomplish the Great Commission. May the Lord give this book a wide reading.”

Leslie Frazier, Ph.D., is Far East Director, Baptist International Missions, Inc.

EUGENE KIMBLE: In his preface to the Chinese edition, Dr. Lin wrote, “May the Lord give mercy through this book so that on the eve of His return...it [may] supplement the weaknesses and delete the excessive in the understanding of the Holy Spirit. As a result we can all walk the straight and narrow and do what is right in the sight of the Lord, so that we shall be blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Further, may it shore up that which is weak in the church identified by Warren Wiersbe when he said, “An evil idea is abroad in the land that spiritual life is not important to spiritual leadership. So long as the leader projects a ‘successful image’ and manifests ‘dynamic,’ he will be successful. Holiness of life, spiritual growth, and obedience to the Word of God have been replaced by promotion, public relations, and obedience to the latest conclusion of the Madison Avenue geniuses,” *Living with the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 237-238.

Eugene Kimble, Ph.D., is one of several pastor/elders at College Park Church, Indianapolis. Dr. Lin asked him to edit and rewrite this and several other of his works for the English-speaking Church.

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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DR. TIMOTHY LIN

Dr. Timothy Lin was born to a minister's family in Chekiang, China. He was taught to read the Bible when he was 6, began to preach when he was 15, but was not born again until age 19. Having left Central Theological Seminary of Nanking in 1934 due to its modernistic teaching, he served as the pastor of Jubilee Church in Shanghai until 1937. In 1938-39 he was principal of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Bible Institute of Kwangsi. In 1940 he came to the United States for the first time to study Hebrew and Greek at Concordia Theological Seminary and Washington University.

During World War II, Dr. Lin was in charge of Bethel Orphanage as well as being the principal of Bethel High School. He was also the dean of Shanghai Bible College. After the war, Dr. Lin was invited to be the president of the East China Theological College of Hangchow, which was cosponsored by the China Inland Mission. Then in 1948 he came again to the United States for advanced study, receiving a B.D. and S.T.M. from Faith Theological Seminary, then in Wilmington, Delaware, and a Ph.D. from the College of Hebrew and Cognate Learnings of Dropsie University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In addition, he holds several other earned and honorary degrees.

Dr. Lin was a member of one of the Old Testament translation committees for the New American Standard Bible. He was also a professor in the graduate school of Bob Jones University, in South Carolina, where he taught Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology, Old Testament Hebrew, Biblical Aramaic, Classic Arabic, and Peshitta Syriac. Moreover, he was a professor at Talbot Seminary, Los Angeles, and Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Chicago, and the president of China Evangelical Seminary in Taiwan.

In 1961 the Lord led him to become interim pastor of the small struggling First Chinese Baptist Church of Los Angeles, and in 1962 the permanent pastor. When he retired as Senior Pastor a few years ago, the church had eight pastors, more than 2,200 in regular Lord's Day attendance, and in addition had started several mission churches with more than 300 in regular attendance.

Dr. Lin has also been a popular teacher and Bible conference speaker, being in great demand by ministers, teachers, and church leaders for training in biblical interpretation and church growth in the Far East as well as in North America.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

CHAPTER I. BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

What Baptism with the Holy Spirit Really Is

“For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5).

“Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17).

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message” (Acts 10:44).

“They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them” (Acts 19:5-6).

John the Baptist foretold the baptism with the Holy Spirit before Jesus began His public ministry when he said of Jesus, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11). This promise, however, was not realized until the beginning of the apostles’ ministry at Pentecost. At that time no one would have believed that almost 2,000 years later this blessed truth would become a source of contention and disharmony in the church—which is indeed tragic.

Some Christians today hold that baptism with the Holy Spirit is the same as water baptism because “Unless one is born of water *and* the Spirit” in John 3:5 can be translated as “unless one is born of water, that is, of the Spirit.” Others insist firmly that every believer, following his new birth, must also be baptized with the Holy Spirit, just as were the apostles at Pentecost, or the twelve disciples at Ephesus. Otherwise, they say, he is not saved. That is a terrifying heresy! Salvation comes by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are others who feel that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the believer’s first of many experiences of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, there are so many diverse opinions that it is practically impossible for the brothers and sisters who desire spiritual growth to decide where the truth lies. Therefore, to “those who love His appearing,” and hopefully without seeming to be presumptuous, I will share my understanding of the matter as given by God’s grace. To understand any idea, it is helpful to start from the beginning, in this case with the word “baptism.”

A. The Meaning of the Word “Baptism.”

The principle of biblical interpretation I will use to determine the exact meaning of the word “baptism” first looks at the root meaning, then studies the word by comparing the various uses of the word in the New Testament itself, and thereby arrives at the correct definition.

The Greek language has two verbs that mean “to baptize”: *bapto*, the common form, and *baptizo*, the intensified form. *Bapto* occurs in the New Testament three times and is

translated “dip” (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Rev. 19:13). The intensified form, *baptizo*, generally means “completely immersed.” Infrequently *baptizo* may mean a partial washing of the hands before meals, which was usually done by pouring water over the hands (Mark 7:4). It was used interchangeably with *nipto*, “wash” (Compare Mark 7:3 with Luke 11:38). The use of *baptizo* in the Septuagint was translated as “drenched” (Dan 4:33), “dip” (Lev. 14:6) and “wash” (2 Kin. 5:10). Thus, the primary meaning of the word “baptism” is “to drench with or to immerse in water.” When the newly born believer is covered by the baptismal waters and then emerges, the Holy Spirit uses this to symbolize the believer’s sharing Christ’s death, burial and resurrection as Colossians 2:12 says, “Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him” (also see, Rom. 6:4).

By using the believer’s physical baptism to illustrate his partaking of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, the Scriptures imply that baptism has a spiritual significance far deeper than the physical event alone. The Bible speaks of his being baptized into the name of the Triune God, but the believer also receives the forgiveness of sins (“John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,” Mark 1:4). Through baptism he has been buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4) and enters into union with Him (“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God,” Col. 3:3; also see Gal. 3:27), which signifies that the sinful nature’s way of living has come to an end and has been replaced with the new nature of life in Christ. To baptize with water is to submerge the Christian briefly then take him out; but when a believer is brought by the Spirit into the family of God, enjoys the forgiveness of sins and all that flows to him as a result of Christ’s substitutionary death, the change is permanent. In other words, when he becomes a part of Christ’s body, he is not left there for a little while and then taken out; but rather, he is put in to abide forever. For example, the intensive verb *baptizo* as used in “for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13) is in the simple past tense, indicative mood and passive voice. This indicates: one, the Holy Spirit was the One placing him into the body of Christ; two, that the act was not accomplished by either his own efforts or those of the church; and three, this placement into the body of Christ was permanent. The Spirit accomplishes all this simply by means of the faith the believer places in the Lord Jesus Christ. This God-given faith enables the believer to share with Christ the historical experience of His crucifixion (which gives him the forgiveness of sin), His death and burial (which frees him from the domination of sin), His resurrection (which allows him to partake of God’s own life), and His ascension to honor at the Father’s right hand (which guarantees his future glorification).

B. The Historical Development of Baptism with the Spirit.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit was initiated at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River, when “the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove” (Luke 3:22; 4:1). Christ the Head of the church was baptized with the Holy Spirit first so that later those who believe on Him might be baptized by the Spirit into His body, the church. This Spirit-baptism of believers into the body of Christ was revealed for our edification in four stages that followed the geographical pattern set forth in Jesus’ command to His disciples

to be “witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

1. In Jerusalem and in all Judea (Acts 1:12-2:47). The disciples, having received Jesus’ Great Commission, waited in prayer at Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come upon them to endue them with power. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, while they were all together praying, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and performed two operations. First, the Lord’s promise—“you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”—came true (Acts 1:5). At that moment the New Testament church was formed when all the Pentecost believers “by one Spirit...were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). Second, at the same time the believers “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” and received the power and ability necessary to be His “witnesses” to the people of every nation (Acts 2:4; 1:8). Their baptism with the Holy Spirit was certainly not a salvation experience, since they possessed eternal life long before Pentecost (“Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God,’” John 6:68-69; also see John 13:10; 17:19). Baptism with the Spirit was for those who had already been born again to properly join and become members of the body of Christ. Their being filled with the Holy Spirit was to give them wisdom, ability and liberty in preaching and in other service for God. That same day, Pentecost, 3,000 Jews were saved and added to the newly formed body. As First Corinthians 12:13 makes plain, their baptism with the Holy Spirit was God’s procedure to make the disciples members of His body. On this occasion “**baptism** with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5) and “**filled** with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4) occurred simultaneously, so that all the 120 believers at Pentecost became members of the body of Christ (Spirit-baptism) and also were qualified to serve the Lord with power (Spirit-filling).

2. In Samaria (Acts 8:1-25). Following His operation at Jerusalem during Pentecost, the next place where the Holy Spirit manifested His presence in great power was in Samaria. The Samaritans were neither wholly Israelite nor completely Gentile. After his conquest of Israel Sargon II, the king of Assyria, brought from cities such as Babylon, Cutah, and Avva people who intermarried with the native Israelites left behind when he carried many of the northern Jews into exile. Not only were the Samaritans a mixture of various people but their religion was a combination of fearing the LORD while simultaneously worshipping idols (2 Kin. 17:24-41). As a result the Jews of Judah in Jesus’ day held them in contempt, considering them to be religiously unclean. Since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah several hundred years earlier, the two groups had not mixed either socially or religiously (Ezra 4:1-10; John 4:4-9, “The Samaritan woman therefore said to [Jesus], ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan?’ [For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans]”). Although the Lord Jesus charged His disciples during His ministry not to enter into any city of the Samaritans because at that time He limited His ministry to the Jews, He still had compassion toward them. This was illustrated by the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well and her neighbors whom He led to have faith in Himself, and also, by His parable of the Good Samaritan. Although He spent two days with the people while passing through Samaria, His present mission was “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24).

At Pentecost the time came for God to expand His mission beyond the lost sheep of Israel to include Samaria and the rest of the Gentiles (Acts 1:8). His first step was to remove the 500-year-old barrier that existed between Jews and Samaritans by making of the two one new entity in Christ Jesus. Under God's providence, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The Samaritans believed God's Word as preached to them by Philip and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received Christ and sent Peter and John to help in the work. The leaders laid their hands on the Samaritans who were then baptized by the Holy Spirit, placing them into the new and ever-growing body of Christ (Acts 8:1-17). This was the first time since Pentecost that the Holy Spirit had extended His work beyond the Jews, and now those who had formerly worshipped on Mount Gerazim could worship God in "spirit and truth" (John 4:20, 24). As at Pentecost, so at Samaria, both "baptism with the Holy Spirit" and the "filling of the Holy Spirit" occurred sometime after the believers had received the Lord. These two events were the first steps in the progressive development of the "baptism with the Holy Spirit." At Caesarea, however, the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" would occur at the same moment that the converts exercised faith in Christ.

3. In Caesarea—a city further removed from Jerusalem than is Samaria (Acts 10:1-48). Caesarea was built by Herod the Great along the coast of Palestine in honor of Augustus Caesar. In his usual magnificent style, Herod erected splendid palaces and public buildings, including a theater and amphitheater with an extensive view of the sea. Under the city a spacious sewer system promoted cleanliness and health. The city was thoroughly Roman. The Talmud called it the daughter of Edom which is the mystic name for Rome, probably denoting the low moral and spiritual condition of the city. There was a large Jewish population living in the city, but the major part of the city's population was Gentile.

Approximately 40 years after the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Roman centurion at Caesarea, Cornelius, sent messengers to Peter inviting him to come to preach to his household, relatives, and friends. Peter was about 30 Roman miles away at Joppa. Because of the divine instruction God gave him in a vision earlier in the day, Peter accepted the invitation and with some close companions journeyed to Caesarea. When he arrived at Cornelius' house, Peter, the orthodox Jew, amazingly admitted, "In every nation the man who fears [God] and does what is right, is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:35). Through the vision previously granted to him, Peter had learned that God is not partial. His gospel was not only for the Jews but for all people who fear the Lord.

Addressing his audience of Gentiles who feared God, Peter continued to preach the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and that "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). During his sermon the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message, just as He had fallen upon the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 11:15). Then Peter said, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized" (Acts 10:47). What Peter meant was that since the people of the Roman household had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, made members of the body of Christ, and were filled with the Holy Spirit who gave them the gift of speaking in tongues (Acts 11:16; 10:46), no one should forbid them the outward ceremony of water baptism

as a public testimony to their inner faith and to admit them to the company of other believers. Here baptism with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ immediately followed the converts' faith in Christ, whereas at Pentecost and Samaria there was quite an interval between the two events. Henceforth, in all of church history from Caesarea onward, faith in Christ will be immediately followed by baptism with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

4. At Ephesus—a city symbolizing the “remotest part of the earth” (Acts 19:1-41). The next revelation regarding the simultaneous baptism and the filling with the Holy Spirit occurred at Ephesus. In Paul's days, Ephesus was situated at the intersection of several major highways in Asia Minor, including the great trade route to the Euphrates River. It was also a major port for trade goods coming from all over the region to be shipped to Rome. At this time it was the governmental center of Rome in Asia. So sooner or later almost everyone in the whole region would visit the city. Therefore, in God's wisdom, the apostle Paul taught here “for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the words of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Later, the Holy Spirit through John would point out Ephesus' spiritual importance by listing it as first among “the seven churches” (Rev. 1:20-2:1). Although the city had great commercial advantage and was an important church center, the majority of the people were very superstitious. Ephesus was probably a center for Eastern magic and magicians. Yet many of these practitioners of magic believed the gospel, confessed their evil practices, and gathered their magic books and parchments together to make a great bonfire of them. The documents they burned were worth 50,000 pieces of silver, which equaled 50,000 days of wages (Acts 19:18-19). Those who practiced the Jewish religion were numerous but had little influence among the local inhabitants. Josephus stated that the special religious privilege enjoyed by the Jews had to be approved by the local authorities and then in Rome by Augustus himself. Ephesus therefore was basically a Gentile city and fittingly represented the non-Jewish world.

Some thirteen years had passed since the Holy Spirit manifested Himself at Cornelius' house in Caesarea by simultaneous Spirit-baptism and Spirit-filling. Coming to Ephesus in about 52 AD, Paul met twelve men who claimed to be disciples. They had been baptized according to the message proclaimed by John the Baptist, but they did not know that Jesus Christ was the One of whom John testified. Paul's first question was “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Their response was, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” Paul immediately explained to them the necessity of believing in Jesus. Following Paul's admonition, they accepted the Lord Jesus and were baptized by water into His name. The Holy Spirit came upon the twelve, and they received the baptism with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and were also filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues and prophesying, which is speaking edifying words inspired by the Lord.

This combination of baptism with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and filling by the Holy Spirit for successful service occurring simultaneously was not seen after that time in the book of Acts or in the rest of the Bible. In other words, the combination of these two works of the Spirit in one operation happened only in the early stages of the church. It began on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem about 30 AD and lasted through

Paul's initial meeting with the twelve disciples at Ephesus about the middle of 52 AD. After the event at Ephesus, when the church had become fairly well established, baptism with the Spirit and Spirit-filling became two separate events. The Spirit's baptism of the believer into the body of Christ continued happening immediately after receiving by faith Jesus as Lord. However, being filled with the Holy Spirit most usually followed salvation after some interval of time. Also, the external manifestation caused by the Holy Spirit coming upon the believers resulted from their being filled with the Spirit, rather than by their baptism with the Spirit into the body of Christ.

Consequently, now whenever a convert believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit gives him a new birth and immediately baptizes him into the body of Christ, without the need for any special external manifestation or any interval of time occurring. This is confirmed by what God said through Paul to the Corinthians, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body [the church]" and "your body [singular] is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Cor. 12:13; 6:19). The "one body" (the church) and "your body" (the individual believer) included all the members of the church in Corinth. No matter who or how weak or how insignificant they were, all the believers there had become "one [church] body" and also the individual "temple of the [indwelling] Holy Spirit" through baptism with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, no one after having been born again should still be seeking for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. To alleviate some of the confusion regarding the various operations of the Holy Spirit, let us consider the differences between baptism with the Spirit and filling with the Spirit.

C. The Differences Between "Baptism with the Spirit" and "Filled with the Spirit."

Because baptism with the Spirit and filled with the Spirit are different works having dissimilar results, we must not say that they are the same thing. Immediately before He ascended to the Father, Jesus gave two promises concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. In Acts 1:5 He said to the disciples, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." In this statement, "baptized with the Holy Spirit" is parallel to "John baptized with water," which clearly means that the purpose of "baptism with the Holy Spirit" and John's baptism are similar—both are procedures for entering into the new organization composed of God's people: the former (Spirit-baptism) being individually private and spiritual, the latter (water baptism) being public testimony of God's prior regenerating work. In Acts 1:8 Jesus gave His second promise, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Immediately following this promise is the clear explanation that the purpose for being filled with the Spirit is "you shall be my witnesses," both nearby and unto the remotest parts of the earth. In verse 5 our Lord emphasized the **procedure** (Spirit-baptism) for becoming a member of His body, the church, and in verse 8 the **power** (Spirit-filling) for serving the Lord in His church. From Pentecost until Paul counseled the twelve disciples at Ephesus, both baptism and filling occurred at the same time. After the occasion at Ephesus, baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred immediately following the believer's exercising salvation faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, while the filling with the Holy Spirit usually came some time later.

Spirit-baptism occurs only once for each individual (1 Cor. 12:13), whereas being filled with the Spirit should be repeated again and again in the believer's life (see Eph. 5:18, where the Greek present tense means to do again and again or to do often). This explains why the believers in the church at Ephesus, after having received the Lord Jesus and having been both baptized with the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, were later commanded to "be filled [often] with the Spirit" (Acts 19:5-7; Eph. 5:18).

There is no absolute necessity for a difference in time between being "baptized with the Spirit" at one's new birth and being "filled with the Holy Spirit" for the first time (as occurred in Act 2:1-4; 8:16-17; 10:44-47; 19:5-6). None the less, there was a short interval between Paul's becoming a member of the body of Christ and his being filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:1-17). The fact remains, however, that although all believers have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, many Christians, if not most, have yet to experience being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In a message preached at the New York Hippodrome, the great evangelist D. L. Moody spoke about the relatively small number of Spirit-filled Christians and the need for all His disciples to seek the Spirit's power for service:

Now I want this clearly understood. We firmly believe that [if] any man...has been cleansed by the blood, redeemed by the blood, and been sealed by the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost dwells in him. And a thought I want to call your attention to is this, that God has got a good many children who have just barely got life, but no power for service. You might say safely, I think, without exaggeration, that nineteen out of every twenty of professed Christians are of no earthly account as far as building up Christ's kingdom; but on the contrary they are standing right in the way, and the reason is because they have just got life and have settled down, and have not sought for power. The Holy Ghost coming upon them with power is distinct and separate from conversion. If the Scripture doesn't teach it I am ready to correct [what I just said].

Let us look and see what God says, and if you will look in the third chapter of Luke you will see that all these thirty years that Christ had been in Nazareth He had been a son, but now the Holy Ghost comes upon Him for service, and He goes back to Nazareth and finds a place where it is written: "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, to recover sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised." And for three years we find Him preaching the kingdom of God, casting out devils, and raising the dead, while for thirty years He was at Nazareth, we hear nothing of Him. He was a son all the while, but now He is anointed for service; and if the Son has got to be anointed, do not His disciples need it, and shall we not seek it, and shall we barely rest with conversion?¹

Perhaps the following chart comparing the purpose and result of Spirit-baptism and Spirit-filling will be helpful.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit

To be members of Christ's body
Establishes the believer's position
Done one time only
For eternity
Unconditional: after receiving Christ

Filled with the Holy Spirit

To be led by the Holy Spirit
Grants power, life, and liberty
Applied for and enjoyed often
For daily work and living
Conditional: obedience, faith and prayer

Although the list is not exhaustive, I believe these items might be sufficient to serve as road signs for our pilgrimage here on earth, so that we will be prepared for successful service to our Lord. Moreover, I desire that every believer understand that after he has received the Lord and has been placed into His body, he should not try to repeat what the Lord did once forever, that is, baptized him into His church by His Spirit. Rather, may each believer constantly pray to "be filled with the Holy Spirit," as the Lord emphasized, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Luke 11:13). The church already has too many who hold "to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Tim. 3:5). Let us, therefore, who profess great love for the Lord ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts so that we can know "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). If we have a clean and believing heart, we can be sure that "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thess. 5:24). Praise the Lord!

We have recounted from the Scriptures multiple instances in which God filled His people with the Holy Spirit: Paul, all of the believers at Pentecost, the believers in Samaria, all of those gathered in Cornelius's house, and the twelve disciples at Ephesus. All were filled with the Holy Spirit to give them power, life, and liberty to minister in God's service, in both sacred and secular tasks. God did not show favoritism to the New Testament believers. Today He will still fill for His service those He has baptized with the Spirit, as many Christians, both well-known believers as well as less well-known ones, can testify. Let us now look in more detail at Spirit-filling.

Chapter II. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Power of God Available for Effective Ministry and Life

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

And Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them (Acts 4:8).

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus...has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

But Saul...filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him (Acts 13:9).

Numerous books on the subject of Spirit-filling can be found in Christian bookstores, but the majority of believers still do not understand what it means to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Some do realize the importance of Spirit-filling, but since they lack knowledge about the Holy Spirit’s Person and work, they usually seek to be filled with the Spirit mainly for the emotional experience. Thus their spiritual lives are not strengthened and their service to God is not empowered by desiring an experience that gratifies only their “self.” Other believers, due to a bad impression made by those who go to emotional extremes, either deny or reject the idea of Spirit-filling entirely, and sometimes even ridicule it. Consequently, they forfeit the grace of God that could be theirs and have little ability to serve God and little perseverance when they do attempt to serve. Between these two groups are some believers who, not wanting to be involved in either extreme and unwilling to study the Scriptures to find out what the truth is, simply ignore Spirit-filling and its importance altogether. They allow prejudice and misinformation to rob them of this glorious blessing and greatly diminish their spiritual lives.

My purpose in this study is to consider the reality of Spirit-filling in a practical way that will bring spiritual results. I have no desire to give an academic discussion nor to attempt to persuade others intellectually of the truth and importance of Spirit-filling. My hope is that all believers may learn how to incorporate Spirit-filling into their lives so that they will have power for witnessing and effective service and enjoy the life-giving effects of this blessing. We will look at the subject of Spirit-filling under five topics: the importance, the misunderstandings, the purpose, the conditions, and the command to be Spirit-filled.

A. The Importance of Spirit-filling.

The Scriptures record, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self...holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:1-7). A careful reading of Second Timothy 3:1-7 reveals that the passage does not describe the wickedness of the world in the last days but the degree of unrighteousness

which will be rampant in the church. The catalogue of vices listed in this passage (for example, lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers) sounds like the universal failings of mankind since the days of Adam. Surely it must be an exaggeration to attribute them to the church! It is only in the church, however, that you will find those who hold to a form of godliness and at the same time are always learning and never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth about God's Word. So it is extremely serious to find such an evil situation in God's holy institution.

This passage in Second Timothy is a vivid description of many individual churches and entire church organizations that outwardly seem alive but inwardly are spiritually dead. What is puzzling, however, is that it also describes many churches (started by true Christians and often pastored by capable ministers) who claim to be pure in the faith and fundamental in basic doctrine. Unfortunately they too know only how to maintain a form of godliness, while denying its liberating power. They either have forgotten, or have never learned, how to obtain power from above by faith. For instance, every Sunday many stand behind the pulpit trying to entertain the listeners in a frivolous way rather than being concerned about preaching God's Word with power. They are orators with good sounding words but with little content or spiritual life in their messages. Many times they make unreasonable interpretations of Scripture just to appeal to the prejudices of their congregations. As a result, many messages from the pulpit have no life-giving power nor do they edify and build up the saints in the faith. The noted evangelist D. L. Moody spoke of the need for God's spiritual life and power to be upon pastors:

What we need specially is power. There was another man whom I have in mind, and he said, "I have heart disease, I can't preach more than once a week," so he had a colleague to preach for him and do the visiting. He heard of this anointing, and said, "I would like to be anointed for my burial. I would like before I go hence to have just one more privilege to preach the gospel with power." He prayed that God would fill him with the Spirit, and I met him not long after that, and he said, "I have preached on an average eight times a week, and I have had conversions all along."

The Spirit came on him. I don't believe the man broke down at first with hard work, so much as using the machinery without oil, without lubrication. It is not the hard work breaks down ministers, but it is the toil of working without power.²

Few of the flood of self-help books rolling off today's printing presses (even those by Christian authors) would have helped this pastor preach the gospel with liberty and power.

In other churches they consider essential for fellowship such questionable activities as drinking, smoking, dancing, card playing, bingo, and so on. Some churches approve divorce and others even ordain homosexuals. The leaders of some denominations favor doing the latter but fear that not enough of the laity are yet willing to accept such an action, and that their membership would decline and the collection box would suffer if they did so. All these evils exist because of darkened spiritual understanding and a dearth of the power that comes from above. When there is a drought in the land and the

population must get their water from polluted wells, a weak and infirm citizenry is the predictable result.

Well-meaning pastors who know the Lord, have a tender heart, and great Scriptural knowledge, yet do not know how to appropriate God's power for preaching, are like a luxury sedan sitting idle in the garage with an empty gas tank. What good are they in God's church? Pastors certainly should work to improve their skills in human relationships, learn how to prepare a worthy sermon and develop administrative skills in order to "bring forth out of [their] treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52). But an even higher priority than improvement in the craft of preaching and church management should be for pastors to learn how to receive power from above and to utilize it in life and ministry, for "the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Cor. 4:20 NIV).

When I was a young man preparing for the ministry, we ministerial students would hold services in surrounding towns. The group of which I was a part regularly drove 65 miles southeast of our school to a town of about 20,000 to hold services in the city hospital, two city jails, and a county jail.

The student who was to preach one particular Sunday asked God to bless His Word in a most unusual way. He did not prepare a evangelistic sermon, but a simple explanation of "I am the vine, you are the branches" in John 15—definitely not the usual message for the prisoners.

About five minutes after the speaker began his low-key homily, one prisoner began to weep aloud. Soon all eight were weeping audibly. One said, "I'm not puttin' on," and another sobbing prisoner cried, "Me either."

Later that day the 23 prisoners in the lower jail and the 6 in the county jail listened respectfully to John 15 with no outward display of emotion.

The following Sunday when we arrived to check in with the officer on duty at the city jail, I heard the steel gate on the second story of the jail creaking as the sturdy March breeze alternately opened and closed it.

"Are there any prisoners up there?" I asked.

"Nope, not a one," he replied.

"How about in the lower jail?"

"None there either," he answered and reflectively continued, "That preaching is getting to these men."

"What happened to the prisoners?"

"They all made bail and left."

Deeply curious, I continued to talk with the officer who told me that he had been a member of the police force for fourteen years and never once during that time had the jail been completely empty. The prisoners in the lower jail had no idea of the wailing for sin that occurred in the upper jail the previous week, yet the Holy Spirit's presence and

power so pervaded the building that to a man every prisoner, both upstairs and down, found the means to make bail and leave—either because of contrition or the fear of God.

The following Sunday the two city jails were still empty. The third Sunday they held a single prisoner, a stranger from out of town. During this period the county jail across town was unaffected by the Holy Spirit's work in the city jail.

While the speaker was not inwardly aware of the Holy Spirit's working as he spoke, he did see the wonderful objective manifestation of the Spirit's power upon men who, as a group, were hardened by sin and usually indifferent to the gospel.

It is only by the mighty power of God that sinners will realize their wickedness and willingly humble themselves to turn from it to receive the LORD as Lord. Only this mighty power will cause backsliders to realize their rebellion and return to God's love. Only by God's mighty power can believers be edified and built up in the truth so that the young Christians will not walk the wrong path and the aged will be constantly strengthened. From Genesis to Revelation the only effective work ever done for God was by the proclamation of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God. The initial chaotic elements of the earth were prepared by the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2 ("and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters") to respond to God's creative life-giving words, "Let there be..." throughout the remainder of the chapter. Christ "who went about doing good, and was healing all who were oppressed by the devil" was empowered to do so because "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). In appropriating the mighty power of the Holy Spirit for fruitful service, Christ was an example for every believer to do God's work with the same authority that their Master did.

D. L. Moody was a person with a nature just like ours. The only difference between him and us is that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and most of the time we are not. William Moody told of his father's experience.

The year 1871 was a critical one in Mr. Moody's career. He realized more and more how little he was fitted by personal acquirements for his work. An intense hunger and thirst for spiritual power were aroused in him by two women who used to attend the meetings and sat on the front seat...at the close of services they would say to him:

"We have been praying for you."

"Why don't you pray for the people?" Mr. Moody would ask.

"Because you need the power of the Spirit," they would say.

"I need the power? Why," said Mr. Moody, in relating the incident years after, "I thought I had power. I had the largest congregation in Chicago, and there were many conversions. I was in a sense satisfied. But right along those two godly women kept praying for me...I began to cry out as I never did before."³

After Moody had been filled with the Spirit, he said, "I went to preach again. The sermons were not different: I did not present any new truths and yet hundreds were

converted.”⁴ This testimony alone provides adequate proof of the importance of Spirit-filling for effective service, but there is more evidence.

The importance of Spirit-filling for effective service is seen in the seventy men who helped Moses judge the Israelites, Bezalel and the tabernacle artisans, the judges of Israel, the prophets, the New Testament apostles, the disciples at Pentecost, and the Lord Jesus Christ—all were filled with the Holy Spirit to do God’s work with power and fruitfulness. Unfortunately, the truth about Spirit-filling has been misunderstood and abused so often that many who have great love for the Lord and earnestly desire His power are afraid to properly investigate it. However, that we “be filled with the Spirit” is still God’s desire and one of His great promises to us. As Scripture says, “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). We would never dare to stop eating just because one time we choked on our food. Likewise, we must ignore the past abuses concerning Spirit-filling and go immediately in prayer to Christ to receive what He has prepared for us to be His effective servants.

E. M. Bounds writes of the absolute necessity of the pastor’s being Spirit filled and of his receiving it by prayer:

Without this unction on the preacher the gospel has no more power to propagate itself than any other system of truth. This is the seal of its divinity. Unction in the preacher puts God in the gospel. Without the unction, God is absent, and the gospel is left to the low and unsatisfactory forces that the ingenuity, interest, or talents of men devise to enforce and project its doctrines...This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was first secured [at Pentecost]; by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, by deeming all else loss and failure without it.⁵

Yet, contrary to Bound’s admonition, church growth seminars abound in the land, with little to no emphasis on the necessity of prayer and the Holy Spirit’s presence and work to give success to our endeavors.

B. Some Misunderstandings Concerning Spirit-filling.

In these last days Satan has caused more confusion about being “filled with the Spirit” than about any other biblical truth. We should expect this because counterfeiting, deceit and fraud are his areas of expertise. He has applied his schemes to this particular grace of God so often that many believers either hold badly distorted ideas about it or keep completely away from it. In order to better understand what Spirit-filling is, I will discuss a few of the misinterpretations—or what Spirit-filling is not.

1. Some brethren confuse Spirit-filling with Spirit-baptism, which they claim is manifested by speaking in tongues. Some insist that every believer should have the baptism of the Spirit accompanied with the same manifestation of speaking in tongues as happened on the Day of Pentecost, or as occurred in Cornelius’ house, or was experienced by the twelve disciples at Ephesus. If the gift of speaking with tongues does not occur, some advise holding a special meeting so that they can pray earnestly and attempt to force

the Holy Spirit to supply the manifestation of speaking in tongues since many believe it is the only sign of Spirit-baptism. In this meeting they may incessantly pray for tongues until their voices are gone, their bodies exhausted, and perhaps their heads spin with dizziness, which often leads to self-hypnosis. Once they achieve the experience, it is a special symbol of being divinely blessed and often is sufficient to last for their whole lifetime. They fail to consider that Paul did not speak with tongues at his initial Spirit-filling (Acts 9:17), nor did the disciples at Antioch do so (Acts 13:52).

When being filled with the Spirit, a person may experience either a strong explosive manifestation or one with no special signs whatsoever. The effect on the individual is at the discretion of the Holy Spirit who “distributes to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). The Holy Spirit cannot be forced to fulfill one’s desire to speak in tongues. When Peter was tried by the Sanhedrin, he did not speak in tongues (Acts 4:8). When Peter and John were released from jail and returned to the other disciples, “when they had prayed, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,” but they did not speak with tongues (Acts 4:31). When Paul received his initial Spirit-filling, he did not speak with tongues (Acts 9:17). Neither did Paul speak with tongues when he was filled with the Holy Spirit for the task of rebuking Elymas the magician (Acts 13:8-10).

Many who speak in tongues are generally unaware that what Christians experience today (other than at the time of salvation) is no longer Spirit-baptism, but Spirit-filling which may or may not be accompanied by outward manifestations. In short, the operation of the Holy Spirit in baptism and filling are two different actions. Although they occurred together at the establishment of the church (See Acts 1:5, “You shall be **baptized** with the Holy Spirit,” and compare with 2:4, “They were all **filled** with the Holy Spirit”), after the experience of the twelve disciples at Ephesus, they were separated into two operations: Spirit-baptism being a general event for all Christians at their new birth (1 Cor. 12:13), and Spirit-filling being a separate special act repeatedly available for all Christians as needed (Eph. 5:18). May all those who understand biblical theology and the progressive nature of God’s revelation say, “Amen!”

Therefore, what believers need to seek today for power to do God’s work is not baptism with the Holy Spirit but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Neither should tongue-speaking be pursued but rather prophesying (“Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy,” 1 Cor. 14:1), which is uttering words inspired by the Spirit which communicate God’s message to the hearers for edification, exhortation and comfort. Furthermore, speaking in tongues is not a sure sign of being Spirit-filled.

2. Other brethren confuse Spirit-filling with sanctification. Some hold that all believers should receive Spirit-filling but confuse it with the Spirit’s work of sanctification. They claim the path to the blessing is the removal of all sin through cleansing their heart and crucifying their flesh. Then, they say, the Spirit will automatically fill them with all kinds of heavenly blessings, especially perfect love and complete holiness. They think that these blessings, and even their salvation, may be lost through various sins and disobedience. Such teaching, however, destroys the believer’s assurance of salvation, degrades the finished work of Christ, and devotes too much merit to personal struggles against sin. In fact, any doctrine that exalts good works as meriting God’s grace will lead to disappointment, even despair. The secret of spiritual victory is

not self-struggle but appropriating by faith the victory wrought by Christ and then resting upon it.

King Jehoshaphat of Judah is an excellent example of how to secure such a victory. When the Moabites and Ammonites came to make war against him, Jehoshaphat called upon his faith and “appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting’” (2 Chron. 20:21). As Israel began to sing and praise, Yahweh Himself started the battle, moving the Moabite and Ammonite armies to attack and destroy one another. When the Judean soldiers arrived on the scene all they saw were dead bodies and total devastation. The battle truly was the Lord’s.

Moreover, other Scriptures admonish, “In repentance and rest you shall be saved” (Is. 30:15), meaning that believers cannot aid themselves by trusting in either the power of the flesh or of the world. Only by the mighty power of the Holy One of Israel can deliverance be brought to those who turn to Him in purity, faith, and obedience; who stop relying upon their own activity and who start resting upon the grace of God. Elsewhere Scripture says, “for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 10:3), indicating that our work for God is not to be performed by the best human skills such as intellectual reason, powerful arguments, or persuasive speech but by the supernatural power of God. Again Scripture says, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord of Hosts” (Zech. 4:6), teaching that we can never accomplish the work God has given us to do by simply increasing our own strength, but by allowing God Himself to fill us with His Spirit for the purpose of doing His work through us.

3. Other well-known brethren have confused Spirit-filling with the fullness of the Spirit. These tend to hold that if a believer is willing to offer his body as a living sacrifice and allow the Spirit to fill him, the Spirit will automatically take complete possession of him. This has been taught to thousands who come to their conferences to be instructed concerning a deeper spiritual life. Scofield said “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” and “quench not the Spirit” are negative conditions for the filling of the Spirit, and “yieldedness,” “faith,” and “prayer” are positive conditions. Yet when I read the Greek New Testament carefully, I found that these are all requirements for being full of the Holy Spirit and not for being filled with the Holy Spirit. “Fill” is an action, whereas “full” is a condition. The former is for the believer’s work and service, the latter is for his abundant spiritual life. So we need to be clear about this. The distinction between them may be seen in this comparison:

To Fill

A verb

An action from above coming into

Gives power to serve

Related to gifts and work

To be Full

An adjective

A condition which overflows from inside out

Related to spiritual growth

Associated with faith and life

This comparison does not mean that the two are unrelated. Although their nature and end result are different, they still have a very close relationship. Stephen and Philip, two of the seven deacons chosen to care for widows in the early church, possessed the Spirit’s fullness which resulted in godly lives as well as powerful sermons. Both of these Spirit-operations work together for effective ministry, growth of the believer’s spiritual life, and

for bringing glory to God. Rain is one of the many important elements for the growth of plants, yet plants do not grow on water alone. Air, sun, and soil are also important. In like manner, Spirit-filling is one of the conditions by which the Holy Spirit causes the believer's entire being to be "full of the Holy Spirit," resulting in a spiritual life full of godly virtues.

4. The truth of Spirit-filling lies between two extreme positions. One group of extremists takes the act of Spirit-filling as evidenced by speaking in tongues to be the climax of a believer's spiritual life. They hold that when a believer has experienced Spirit-filling even once, he has reached the high point of God's desire for him and he does not need to pursue any further the Spirit's fullness in his life. Just prior to the Sino-Japanese war when I was a pastor in Shanghai, I knew some believers who felt that they needed neither to pray with understanding nor to receive enlightenment from God's Word to achieve a mature and abundant spiritual life. They regarded edification from God's Word as unimportant and the careful study of His Word as a nuisance. They wanted to take a short cut to spiritual growth by emphasizing emotional stimuli while neglecting edification that would develop their spiritual life. When praying, their desire was to enter into an emotional twilight zone induced by clapping upraised hands in rhythm while yelling "Hallelujah" repeatedly, and unfortunately often fell into Satan's trap of self-hypnosis and, thus becoming defenseless, some even allowed demons to influence them.

For this reason the daily life of some tongue-speakers is no different than that of those who belong to the world, and according to my experience, in some cases may be even worse; although they claim that because they speak in tongues they have been filled with the Spirit. They often focus extensively on self with the result that their pride is often greater than that of a peacock. They imagine that they are God's favorite children and condemn those who do not speak in tongues as of the world. Some women, failing to heed the scriptural command to respect their husbands, have belittled their spouses who do not speak in tongues, calling them sons of perdition. What a tragedy!

The other extreme wants the fullness of the Spirit only for their personal spiritual benefit and neglects the filling with the Spirit that would help them reach His fullness in their lives. They do not realize why they are so weak in their service and have no fruit from their labor for God. Their actual spiritual life and their ideal spiritual life are not in harmony, for they live in imaginary castles that are suspended in thin air. In truth, the reality lies somewhere between these two extremes.⁶

C. The Purpose of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of Spirit-filling is not the same as that of baptism with the Holy Spirit or of being full of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-filling is the very power of God energizing the faculties of our inner man for the accomplishment of the work to which God has called us. To be Spirit-filled is to experience divine power to do all kinds of ministry and to overcome our ignorance and weaknesses. Concerning this point, F. F. Bruce explains, "The Spirit of God can energize men and impart to them physical power, mental skill, or spiritual insight that they would not otherwise have."⁷

It is evident that God gave Bezalel and his fellow artisans Spirit-filling to endow them with wisdom to design the articles for the tabernacle and the ability to execute their designs (“He has filled [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship...to know how to perform all the work in the constructing of the sanctuary,” Ex. 35:30-36:1). Moreover, Spirit-filling qualified Bezalel and Oholiab to instruct other workmen in all the skills needed to make the articles for the holy tent (“He has also put in [their hearts] to teach,” Ex. 35:30). Jesus taught this same principle when He promised that Spirit-filling obtained through prayer (“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him,” Luke 11:13) would enable believers to answer effectively when wrongfully accused in court (Matt. 10:17-20) and to witness everywhere with power (“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses,” Acts 1:8). His promise was wonderfully fulfilled when the apostles preached at Pentecost with great boldness and liberty (Acts 2:6-11; 4:31), and when Paul powerfully rebuked Elymas the magician (Acts 13:8-12).

Spirit-filling need not be accompanied by supernatural manifestations or unusual activities, although in some instances it may produce external manifestations. The wind blows wherever and however it wishes, lightly one time and strongly the next. Sometimes it may be merely a mild breeze bending the long stems of wheat or corn so that the field appears to be a gently rolling sea of vegetation. On other occasions the wind may become a powerful tornado, uprooting large trees and sweeping houses off their foundations. No one would say that a gale force storm is the wind and a mild summer breeze is not. Actually tornadoes and summer breezes are the same wind manifested in different forms arising from different conditions. The difference between a gale and a breeze is in the intensity of the wind. The same principle applies to being filled with the Spirit. Unfortunately, many Christians believe that being filled with the Spirit must always be accompanied by tornado-like manifestations. Every Christian should be repeatedly filled with the Spirit; however, the degree of intensity and the outward manifestations will vary because of differences in each individual’s understanding of Christ, because of variations in the believer’s obedience to Him, and because of the Spirit’s purpose at the time.

1. “To be filled with the Spirit” is for all kinds of duties. In the days after Israel came out of Egypt, God put His Spirit upon the seventy elders so that they could share Moses’ and Joshua’s responsibilities in shepherding the people (“He took of the Spirit who was upon [Moses] and placed *Him* upon the seventy elders,” Num. 11:25-29). It was in this same period that Bezalel and others were filled with the Spirit of God to give them wisdom to construct the tabernacle with all its various utensils and furniture (Ex. 28:3; 31:1-11). “The Spirit of the Lord came upon” Jephthah, Samson and various other judges in order to deliver the Israelites from their enemies (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14); upon Saul (“Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily,” 1 Sam. 11:6) and David (“The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward,” 1 Sam. 16:13) so that they could rule the entire nation of Israel competently. He also descended upon the prophets so that they could speak for Yahweh, the LORD (“Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Johoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said

unto them, ‘Thus God has said,’” 2 Chron. 24:20). In the New Testament times, the Holy Spirit came upon John the Baptist to call the nation to repentance and salvation, and to rebuke the common sins of Israel (Luke 1:13-16). Elizabeth and Zacharias, parents of John the Baptist, were filled with the Holy Spirit to witness for the Lord (Luke 1:41-42, 67). The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus to anoint Him to preach the gospel and perform His entire ministry (Luke 4:18-19; Acts 10:38). In the book of Acts, the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” is mentioned six times. Each passage, except the last, states unequivocally that those who were filled with the Holy Spirit also witnessed for Christ. Even in the last account, we may also be sure that the believers at Antioch witnessed for the Lord through their joy. Likewise, Paul, the chief apostle, was filled again and again with the Holy Spirit to do God’s work with power and effectiveness (Acts 9:17; 13:9), and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he commanded that all Christians “be filled [often] with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

Some Scripture verses say “the Spirit came upon or fell upon him” whereas others say “he was filled with the Spirit.” This is simply a matter of grammar. When the Spirit is the subject of the sentence, the verb must be in the active voice; but when the believer is the subject, the passive verb is used because he certainly cannot fill himself. In most Old Testament passages, either the Spirit or God is the subject used with the active verbs “came upon,” “fell upon,” “poured out,” or “filled with.” In the New Testament, most verses have the believer as the subject, so naturally the passive verb “be filled with” is used. But even in the New Testament when the Holy Spirit is the subject of the verb, “came upon” or “fell upon” is used (Luke 2:25; 3:22; Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15). In other words, “came upon” or “fell upon” and “be filled” are two different views of the same action, and thus the Scriptures do not teach that the Spirit “came upon” only in the Old Testament and “filled” only in the New. For example, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism (Matt. 4:16) that resulted in the same manifestation as Spirit-filling. Subsequently, He was led by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1) and performed His ministry in the Spirit’s power (Luke 4:18) and by the Spirit’s anointing (Acts 10:38). Remember, too, that Bezalel, Oholiab and their associate artisans were “filled with the Spirit of God” to do God’s work (Ex. 35:30-36:1), and all the Old Testament prophets had the indwelling Spirit of God enabling them to proclaim God’s Word with life and power (“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the **Spirit of Christ within them** was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow,” 1 Pet. 1:10-11) in much the same manner as New Testament saints who had the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1-6), which is “declaring the mind of God in the power of the Spirit.”⁸ In principle, the Holy Spirit’s work in the individual is the same in both the Old and the New Testaments, although the manifestation of filling is somewhat different because of the progressive nature of God’s revelation.

2. “To be filled with the Spirit” is for preaching God’s message with spiritual life and power. Because Spirit-filling is mainly to empower believers for works of ministry, any worker who is not filled with the Spirit will lack the right degree of ability in the gospel ministry—to be kind and affectionate in serving the Lord, to have good spiritual results in teaching, preaching, shepherding the sheep or in edifying and building up the

flock. I know of a young Christian who was asked to pray during a special service. In his prayer he asked God the Holy Spirit to anoint the speaker with liberty and power so that God would be glorified and the people edified. After the service the pastor rebuked the young man, saying, “We don’t have to pray for the Holy Spirit to come. He’s already here.” Yet to be filled with His Spirit is essential for effective service in the work of the Lord. It is little wonder that Christ did not permit the disciples to go forth to be witnesses for Him until they had received power from on high, telling them not to leave Jerusalem, “but to wait for what the Father had promised” (Acts 1:4).

D. L. Moody illustrated the importance of Spirit-filling for effective service by this example from his ministry:

The great question before us now is, Do we want it [Spirit-filling and anointing for service]? I remember when I first went to England and gave a Bible reading, I think about the first I gave in that country, a great many ministers were there, and I didn’t know anything about English theology, and I was afraid I should run against their creeds, and I was a little hampered, especially on this very subject, about the gift of the Holy Spirit for service. I remember particularly a Christian minister there who had his head bowed on his hand, and I thought the good man was ashamed of everything I was saying, and of course that troubled me. At the close of my address he took his hat and away he went, and then I thought, “Well, I shall never see him again.” At the next meeting I looked all around for him and he wasn’t there, and at the next meeting I look again, but he was absent; and I thought my teaching must have given him offense. But a few days after that, at a large noon prayer meeting, a man stood up and his face shone as if he had been up in the mountain with God, and I looked at him, and to my great joy it was this brother. He said he was at that Bible reading, and he heard there was such a thing as having fresh power to preach the Gospel; he said he had made up his mind that if that was for him he would have it; he said he went home and looked to the Master, and that **he had never had such battle with himself in his life**. He asked that God would show him the sinfulness of his heart that he knew nothing about, and he just cried mightily to God that he might be emptied of himself and filled with the Spirit, and he said, “God has answered my prayer.” I met him in Edinburgh six months from that date, and he told me he had preached the Gospel every night during that time, that he had not preached one sermon but that some remained for conversation, and that he had engagements four months ahead to preach the Gospel every night in different churches. I think you could have fired a cannon ball right through his church and not hit anyone before he got this anointing; but it was not thirty days before the building was full and aisles crowded. He had his bucket filled full of fresh water, and the people found it out and came flocking to him from every quarter.⁹

Jesus wants His disciples to perform their ministry with the same power in which He accomplished His work. As the Scriptures testify, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...and He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all” (Luke 4:14-15). For this reason, before beginning their gospel ministry following Jesus’ ascension, the disciples prayed earnestly and fervently for this heavenly endowment.

Likewise, Paul asked the Colossian believers to pray “that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3). Herbert M. Carson thinks that Paul’s request “may be viewed as a desire that he may be given by the Spirit that ability to preach the gospel which is beyond the unaided natural powers.”¹⁰ Truly, preaching the gospel “is beyond the unaided natural powers.” E. M. Bounds explains this further, “The power of preaching lies not simply or solely in superlative devotion to God’s Word, and jealous passion for God’s truth. All these are essential, valuable, helpful. But above all these things, there must be the sense of the divine presence, and the consciousness of divine power of God’s Spirit on the preacher and in him. He must have an anointing, an empowering, a sealing of the Holy Spirit, for the great work of preaching, making him akin to God’s voice and giving him the energy of God’s right hand ...”¹¹

D. L. Moody, the Spirit-filled evangelist, spoke again about the need of the gospel servant to be Spirit-filled, writing, “I have lived long enough to know that if I cannot have the power of the Spirit of God on me to help me work for Him, I would rather die than just live for the sake of living.”¹² Spurgeon had similar thoughts, saying, “Let the preacher...burn his manuscript and **depend upon the Holy Spirit**. If the **Spirit does not come to help him**, let him be still and let the people go home and **pray that the Spirit will help him** next Sunday.”¹³

From his statement, one realizes that Spurgeon knew well his need for the Holy Spirit as the Helper. He preached to thousands of people each Sunday at a time when most congregations were only a handful of people. He founded a school and stood for righteousness, morality and the truthfulness of the Bible. Although he has been dead for over 100 years now, more of Spurgeon’s sermons are sold annually than those of any other preacher, living or dead. He was indeed a mighty man of God and realized that the source of his power for effective preaching was the Holy Spirit as his Helper. God knows that in our natural weak self we could never carry on His work, so He gave the Holy Spirit to help us (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 where the NASB translates the Holy Spirit’s name *parakletos* as Helper).

Commenting on the two witnesses in Revelation 11:4 (“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth”), Mounce gives this meaning: “By these two metaphors John is emphasizing a truth concerning the church which has always been true but is especially appropriate in times of persecution—that the power and authority for effective witness lies in the Spirit of God.”¹⁴

3. “To be filled with the Spirit” is for all Christians who would be effective disciples. The previous discussion does not mean that Spirit-filling is God’s special privilege exclusively for pastors. It is for all believers. As Moses said, “would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them” (Num. 11:29). God later promised this very thing, “I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...Even upon my bondslaves, both men and women; I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy,” (Acts 2:17-18). Our gracious Lord gave an invitation in the temple to the

same end, “He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38). So God has granted to every believer the privilege of being filled with the Spirit. Not only Peter and John but the entire body of believers who prayed with them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:23-31). The examples in Samaria, in Cornelius’ house, at Ephesus, and of the disciples at Antioch of Pisidia are all clear indications that **Spirit-filling is a heavenly gift granted to all God’s children** (“And they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit,” Acts 2:4). By repeatedly using the term “the gift of the Holy Spirit” throughout the book of Acts (2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17), the apostles emphasized the gift character of His presence.

Spirit-filling is the help every believer needs **to be an effective Christian**. By being filled with the Holy Spirit our **natural abilities are energized** so that we may perform every ministry He gives with liberty, life, authority, and effectiveness. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who Himself is the help we need in order to live an overcoming life and be effective in our ministry. Sadly, not every believer takes advantage of the help and power God offers through being Spirit-filled.

4. “To be filled with the Spirit” and emotions. When a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, his emotional feelings may become excited, but they should not race as a wild stallion across the valley floor. When a medium or witch doctor falls into a trance at a temple or shrine, he is possessed by demons, and will dance, shake, become semi-conscious, and uncontrollably utter demonic-given unknown tongues. Such loss of control will never occur when the Holy Spirit fills a believer, yet lost of control regularly happens in some Christian gatherings.

Regarding emotions in spiritual matters, two extreme views presently prevail. One view holds that human emotions belong to the flesh, are degraded, and that under no circumstances should they ever play any part during the Spirit’s work. The life of a Christian, they feel, should be solemn with all expression of joyful feelings suppressed. Otherwise, they think, the believer does not display a desirable Christian model, but is an emotionalist or exhibitionist. The other view is exactly the opposite, and equally extreme. These Christians let their emotions run loose, or amok, and forget that they are rational beings. When praying, worshipping or preaching, they allow their emotions such free rein that they sometimes become semi-conscious. At times, they deliberately empty their minds that leaves room for Satan and can lead later to all sorts of unfortunate results. Some reach such a high level of emotional intensity that they no longer care whether their actions are normal. As long as they can sustain an emotional high, they are satisfied and even exhibit a holier-than-thou attitude because of their self-induced state of excitement. They fall into an egomaniacal trap, deceiving others about the Spirit’s work and cheating themselves by accepting an illusion rather than reality. This is not only pitiful; it is tragic.

Neither of these extreme views agrees with God’s truth because God Himself created emotions, together with reason and will power, and gave them to us in order that we might be psychologically well balanced. As long as we use and develop each part of our personality according to God’s ordained rule, everything will be beautiful. Believers should develop and use each part in proper proportion, in order to maintain psychological equilibrium and to help prevent mental problems. During Spirit-filling the believer

should not overthrow either reason or will and let emotions run wild. True Spirit-filling makes one's intellect more logical, one's will more sturdy, and one's emotions more rich, "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33).

When the saints are edified by our teaching, when the church is strengthened and blessed by our preaching, when sinners are converted by our witnessing, when our family life is stabilized and flourishes, when our jobs become a joy, and when our relatives and neighbors become our friends, we have the objective proof of the Spirit-filling for which we prayed. These manifestations will be accompanied by joy in our hearts and a sense of the presence of God. But how can we receive power to accomplish these humanly impossible tasks? The Bible plainly sets forth the conditions for us to be Spirit-filled.

D. The Conditions for Being Filled with the Spirit.

After studying the importance of being filled with the Spirit, the immediate question should be: How can we be Spirit-filled? There is only one way and that is by God's grace alone. We need to obey His conditions. We must offer Him our trust and obedience before He will fill us for His effective service. To trust and obey is not a demonstration of our cooperation with Him, nor is it any kind of meritorious work. It is simply complying with His prerequisites to be filled with Himself, just as we meet our need for fresh air by first exhaling the stale then inhaling the fresh.

Consider these scriptural examples. If the disciples had not obeyed Christ's command to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring and filling of the Holy Spirit, they probably would not have been filled (Acts 1:4; 2:4). If Peter and John had given heed unto the high priest, Annas, to stop preaching the good news about the resurrected Christ rather than obeying God who told them to continue speaking of what they had seen and heard, they would not have been filled with the Holy Spirit time after time (Acts 4:6, 8, 31). Saul was not filled on the road to Damascus when he saw the Lord, but after he had prayed and fasted for three days. As soon as Peter started to speak, Cornelius and all those listening were filled with the Holy Spirit because he was "a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household...and prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:2, 44; 11:15).

To those who desired His power for effective ministry, God's requirements for Spirit-filling were the same in the Old Testament as in the New. Only after Gideon had obeyed God by pulling down the altar of Baal, cutting down the Asherah beside it and building a new altar on which he sacrificed to the LORD, did the Spirit of the LORD come upon him (Judg. 6:25-34). The Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul and David after they had accepted God's call and were anointed to be king over Israel (1 Sam. 10:1, 10; 16:13). When he looked and saw as his teacher asked of him, Elisha received a double portion of the spirit that moved Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-12).

Mighty Samson and David, Israel's finest king, show the negative results that sin has upon the spiritual life of God's man. It was only after Samson has lost his obedience and purity that "his strength left him" because "the LORD had departed from him" (Judg. 16:19-20). Likewise, David, following his terrible sin of adultery and murder, knew that he could well lose the Holy Spirit's power and anointing upon his life. By His mercy God spared David from becoming spiritually impotent when he quickly repented ("wash

me thoroughly from my iniquity”) and prayed that God would “not take Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Ps. 51:2,11). Numerous 20th century religious leaders and pastors, once mighty in spiritual power, lost their ministry and effectiveness, following their loss of moral character.

All these examples point to trust and obedience as divine requirements for Spirit-filling. Since to “trust and obey” are so important, what do they mean and how can we put them into practice? The process of learning to “trust and obey” might follow these steps.

1. The need to recognize and acknowledge the importance of Spirit-filling. It is a sad fact that most believers have never been filled with the Holy Spirit. Some either do not understand what is meant by Spirit-filling or do not recognize how important it is to their spiritual life and ministry to be filled with the Spirit. There are others who lack courage to act upon what they know about Spirit-filling because they suffer from weak faith that does not allow them to believe and act upon all the truths of Scripture. These may have only a partial understanding or were abused or frightened by some who take an extreme view of Spirit-filling. The responsibility for the lack of understanding about being filled with the Spirit lies in part at least at the door of the church which unfortunately neglects this truth.

Without doubt, no one would ever be saved without first having a spiritual understanding of the importance of salvation and of the need to repent and believe. Without knowledge he would not know where to begin. Likewise, no one can be filled with the Spirit until he has recognized the great value of being filled. This is why Christ repeatedly reminded the apostles, both before His death and after His resurrection, regarding the key role the Holy Spirit was to play in their life and ministry. He often spoke of this truth to teach His disciples to recognize the significance of Spirit-filling, to act upon it as quickly as possible, and not to waste their time in a fruitless ministry. In these last days, the necessity for Spirit-filling should be emphasized frequently from the pulpit. No matter what kind of work we do (secular or sacred), we still need the Holy Spirit to fill us over and over again, in recognition of the spiritual principle, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Our flesh can produce only what is earthy. To accomplish God’s work, we must have the Holy Spirit—the Divine Helper—to empower us.

2. The need to understand and accept the pure nature of the Holy Spirit. In order to be Spirit-filled it is essential to know and to accept the holy nature of the Spirit. Dr. A. A. Hodge wrote an excellent description of the Spirit’s holiness. “He is called the Holy Spirit because He is the author of holiness throughout the universe...the end and glory of whose work in the moral world is holiness, as in the physical world beauty.”¹⁵

Since the Holy Spirit specializes in accomplishing beautiful and holy works, He will not fill an unclean vessel. The same principle was illustrated when Jesus said, “no one puts new wine into old wine skins” (Luke 5:37), because new wine and old wine skins are completely incompatible. Likewise, a dirty heart is not a suitable dwelling for the Holy Spirit. They do not belong together. God disciplined King Saul, rendering him unable to commit dreadful crimes against God’s chosen ones, Samuel and David. Those who

desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit but are unwilling to be pure before the Lord should heed this serious warning (1 Sam. 19:14-24).

The need for dedication in order to be Spirit-filled is seen in Acts 2:4, “They were all filled **with the Holy Spirit.**” The phrase “with the Holy Spirit” is a genitive of material, showing who filled the disciples. As when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus “the house was filled *with the fragrance* of the perfume” (John 12:2), the idea here is not to get more of the Spirit but to allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to be sovereign and to enter into every area of the believer’s life, much as the aroma of Mary’s ointment penetrated the entire house. This is well illustrated in Acts 2:2 when the noise from heaven heralding the Holy Spirit’s epochal approach “filled the whole house where they were sitting.” “House” is in the accusative case referring to the thing filled, showing that every floor, room and closet was filled with the sound of the Holy Spirit’s arrival. As sound entered into every compartment of the house, so it is the Holy Spirit’s desire, and requirement for effective service, that every aspect of our lives must be open to Him: our thoughts, our relationships, our intellect and our emotions.

The Holy Spirit could enter into every venue of the early believers’ lives because they had obediently remained in a hostile environment (“He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised” 1:4), “continually devoting themselves to prayer” (1:14) and to fellowship with each other. We may need to remain in a hostile family, neighborhood, workplace, or even church relationship all the while showing reasonableness, sweet disposition and devotion to prayer, in order to develop and manifest our faithfulness to God and His truths before the Spirit fills us for the first time. We may then discover a complete change in both our attitude towards others and their relationship to us, in the same manner that many formerly antagonistic Jews turned to the early disciples when “about three thousand were added to their number that day [of Pentecost]...They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 3:41, 46-47). Therefore, we must forsake unrighteousness by repenting of all our sins and allow the precious blood of our Lord Jesus to cleanse our hearts before seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This way we comply with the Holy Spirit in His desire for us to be pure before His work within us can proceed. As preparation for Spirit-filling, we may want to deal with our sin in this manner:

- If our sin has offended only God, we confess to God: “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight,” (Ps. 51:4a).
- If we have offended our fellow man, then according to the Scripture, we have also offended the Lord, who created and cares for man. So we must confess to both parties (Lev. 6:1-7; Num. 5:6-7). J. Wilbur Chapman explains:

“It may be helpful to ask the question, ‘Why have I not received Him?’ This may be for many reasons. *First.* It may be because we have disobeyed some clear command of the Master: if at any time in the past we have broken a thread in the weaving of a garment, we need not expect to know about the fullness of the Spirit until we have made the past right with God. If it was an unkind word

spoken, an inconsistent action which caused another to stumble or fall, if it is some unforgiven sin, then make it right.”¹⁶

- If our sin is robbery or theft or other similar transgressions, we must confess to the Lord and also repay the victim by making “restitution for it in full, and add to it one-fifth more” (Lev. 6:5).
- If the offended party is no longer living, or for some reason cannot accept restitution, it should be paid to his closest relative. If there are no relatives, it should be given to the church (“But if the man has no relatives to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong must go to the Lord for the priest,” Num. 5:8).

These are God’s mathematics governing the regulation of confession and restitution. Against whomever we have sinned, to him should our confession be; not to a substitute, nor to a priest. Compensation should be given to whom restitution belongs and should not be offered to God, unless the injured person has passed away and there is no near relative to accept the payment in his place. In short, real confession is confessing according to God’s standards.

3. The need to appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit by prayer. Once we recognize how important it is for us to be filled with the pure and holy Spirit of God to accomplish God’s purpose in our life, how must we get the filling? Commenting on Acts 1:14 (“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer”), I. Howard Marshall writes: “If the Holy Spirit is the divine gift which empowers and guides the church, the corresponding human attitude toward God is *prayer*. It is as the church prays that it receives the Spirit.”¹⁷ The spiritual understanding necessary to receive Spirit-filling is even more necessary than is the reading of numerous books on the subject. Part of your prayer life should be devoted to asking God again and again to illumine your insight concerning how to receive His spiritual power and ability, allowing you to minister grace and life to His children with liberty, wisdom and power. Because of failure to do this, the church is weak and powerless and the pulpit has no strength either to feed the spiritual life of the saints or to arouse them to serve God. Few believers are praying earnestly and persistently to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Having inherited from Adam a natural bent toward laziness our old sinful nature readily accepts the false view that the Bible does not teach us to pray for Spirit-filling. In the days before our Lord’s return all prayer will become so uncommon that Jesus said, “when the Son of Man comes, will He find [praying] faith on the earth” (Luke 18:8b). I heard of a divinity school in the Far East where some students actually scoff at other students who pray, saying that they fail to see the reality of life.¹⁸ But what do the Bible and some of the saints have to say about the reality concerning praying for Spirit-filling?

a. Taught by the Lord. There are not a great number of scriptural references emphasizing the necessity to pray for the filling of the Spirit, but our Lord clearly stated, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask” (Luke 11:13). This promise agrees with Jesus’ teaching concerning prayer elsewhere. He said, “Ask [repeatedly] and it shall be given to you” (Matt. 7:7). In this verse the verb “ask” is the Greek present tense that means to pursue with persistence or to do again and

again. Then the Father shall (future tense) give us the Holy Spirit. All of God's grace exists as objective promises. If we want to enjoy God's promises subjectively in our lives, we must accept them by faith in order to receive them. Praying to God again and again for Spirit-filling is one wonderful way for faith to be raised up to receive this marvelous blessing. The disciples' filling with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is clearly related to the gathering of the 120 people in the upper room at Jerusalem who "with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). When Peter and John were threatened and then released from jail, they went to their own companions, who together lifted their voices to God in one accord in prayer. The result was, "they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). These examples clearly demonstrate the relationship between Spirit-filling and prayer.

Praying for Spirit-filling does not mean that we should conduct all night prayer and waiting meetings, or continually fast and plead. As long as we acknowledge the importance of being filled with the Spirit, recognize His holy nature, give ourselves unto purity and pray time after time; one day, when faith to receive this blessing rises up within us, we shall truly have our first taste of the sweetness of being filled with the Spirit, just as the fresh air automatically rushes in when we expand our lungs to receive it.

b. Testified to by the saints. At this point, the question might arise, "Since we are not to conduct all-night meetings to seek the filling with the Spirit, how long should one continue asking for the first filling?" The answer is, "Only God knows." He knows exactly the best time for His child to experience this blessing. Usually the believer's initial Spirit-filling will occur sometime after his new birth, although Spirit-filling and conversion can be experienced at the same time. G. Campbell Morgan once said, "When a person is born of the Spirit, he will possess the Spirit and this is very true or else, he does not belong to him. But it is possible that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit later on and this is also true."¹⁹ The following testimonies show that God has no set time for it to occur.

It can happen at once: Dr. Wilbur Chapman (chosen by Mr. Moody to be the vice-president of the Moody Bible Institute) had the experience of being immediately filled with the Holy Spirit the first time he went before God and dedicated himself for Spirit-filling. Dr. Chapman prayed, "My Father, I now claim from you the infilling of the Holy Ghost." He testified later, "From that moment to this, he has been a living reality."²⁰

Concerning the relationship of prayer to Spirit-filling, Dr. Chapman writes:

I had in a former parish a young Irishman; all would declare him to be ignorant and he was; but God marvelously used him. This was the secret. With a heart burdened for the men of the city, I called together a few of the men of the church, and laying before them the plan I had in mind, told them first of all that we could do nothing without the "infilling of the Holy Ghost." When this had been explained I noticed this man leave the room. He did not return while the meeting was in session. When I sought him I found him in one of the lower rooms of the church, literally on his face before God. He was in prayer. I shall never forget his petition: "O God, I plead with Thee for this blessing"; then, as if

God were showing him what was in the way, he said: “My Father, I will give up every known sin, only I plead with Thee for power”; and then, as if his individual sins were passing before him, he said again and again: “I will give them up; I will give them up.” Then, without any emotion, he rose from his knees, turned his face heavenward, and simply said, “And now I claim the blessing.” For the first time he became sensible of my presence, and with a shining countenance he reached out his hands to clasp mine. You could feel the very presence of the Spirit as he said: “I have received Him; I have received Him.” And I believe he had, for in the next few months he led more than sixty men into the Kingdom of God. His whole life had been transformed. He is just now being set apart to preach the gospel.²¹

It can take three hours: Christmas Evans, the Welsh evangelist, was filled with the Holy Spirit after three hours of praying before God.

It can take a week: Dr. Torrey became convinced from the study of the Acts of the Apostles that no one had a right to preach the gospel until he had been filled with the Holy Spirit. He said that he would never enter the pulpit again until he had been filled with the Holy Spirit and knew it. “But Sunday did not come before the blessing came...As to what the blessing has done for me, I could not begin to tell. It has brought a joy into my soul that I never dreamed of before; a liberty in preaching.”²²

It might take a little longer: After Moody understood the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit, he said, “I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day in the city of New York, Oh, what a day!—I cannot describe it...it is almost too sacred an experience to name...I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world—it would be as the small dust of the balance.”²³

It is the believers’ responsibility and obligation to persistently continue in prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, especially for the first filling. The time, method, and degree of the believers’ being filled is in God’s hand. If the believers have tried their best, God will certainly do His part and wonderfully fulfill His promise. The Lord Jesus taught, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). The requirements that God sets for being filled with the Spirit should be faithfully followed at every filling; but they are essential for the first filling.

After having experienced being filled with the Spirit the first time, the average Christian can easily appropriate and enjoy this grace regularly. Whether he is praying, meditating upon God’s Word, or thinking about God’s wonderful works in his life, at that moment, if he has a clean heart and conscience before God and is in total obedience, he can enjoy the blessing of being filled with the Spirit.

Those of us who have been sent by God to speak for Him especially need this grace from God so that we can imitate “those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven” (1 Pet. 1:12). Before speaking we should always pray for His filling. To be filled is His command and our blessing. If we are pure and obedient, He will be

willing to fill us for the sake of His children to whom we minister. If we are willing to believe God's promise for Spirit-filling and appropriate it as He teaches us, we will be neither lazy nor unfruitful in our ministry and service.

E. God Commands Us to “Be Filled with the Spirit.”

The primary purpose for the Holy Spirit to fill us is not for our emotional enjoyment (although it may gladden our heart), nor for the fullness of the Christian's spiritual life (although it will empower us to forsake worldliness and to live closer to the Lord), nor for the eradication of our carnal nature (although it will enlighten our understanding and help us to know how to apply what Christ has done to our old nature). Spirit-filling is given mainly to empower us to serve God by activities such as leading people to Christ, establishing churches, preaching life-giving, edifying sermons, and giving good counsel. The Holy Spirit has also been given to empower us to serve our Lord effectively in secular activities, which include being a worthy Christian spouse, parent and neighbor and serving God competently in our vocation as a living witness to the grace of God in our lives.²⁴

According to most manuscripts and versions, the Epistle to the Ephesians was written “to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1). Although some question the destination “at Ephesus”, the letter is nevertheless God's inspired Word to believers chosen “in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3). They had “faith in the Lord Jesus [and] love for all the saints” among themselves (Eph. 1:15). They “were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). Yet, God writing through Paul told them, “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled [often] with the Spirit**” (Eph. 5:18).

In this verse God's command to be filled often with the Spirit is contrasted with getting drunk with wine, an everyday problem of ordinary people at that time. This implies that to be filled with the Spirit is not just a privilege of the upper class. A light alcoholic beverage composed of two-thirds water and one-third wine was a commonplace item in the daily life of the people. Since drinking water in those days was frequently polluted, this light wine was consumed instead of water. However, if one drank too much of this water-wine mixture, he could get drunk and that would be dissipation. The word “dissipation” is a compound word consisting of a negative prefix with the word “saving,” both together meaning “incurable moral behavior” or “unruly emotional release.” The latter meaning is appropriate here. So whoever claims to be filled with the Spirit and at the same time displays unruly actions is not manifesting the Holy Spirit's filling but is involved in actions prohibited by the Spirit. For this reason, in a passage dealing with the work of the Spirit, the Scriptures say, “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace” and again “Let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

“Be filled” is in the imperative mood, indicating that to “be filled [often] with the Spirit” is God's command. Many wrongly believe that other than the Ten Commandments there are no commands from God that are binding upon us today. To the contrary, there are many commands both in the Old and New Testaments that remain in effect. For example, “Be holy, for I am holy,” “Devote yourselves to prayer,” “Rejoice

always,” and “Do not quench the Spirit” are all words that God intends, by His grace, that we obey. So to “be filled with the Spirit” is just one of many biblical injunctions which we who have truly accepted the Lord should try our best to appropriate through faith and prayer. Otherwise, we will be disobedient to God’s Word, and our spiritual lives and service will be impotent and unfruitful. Especially when preparing to preach, we should pray for the Spirit’s filling and trust Him that we have been filled. Then we can preach with power, edification, and spiritual life, because God demands that we preach with the Spirit’s help. Thus we should remember and believe Jesus’ promise, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). We should not be like those who pray for Spirit-filling but doubt God’s willingness to answer and as a result receive nothing. We should pray in faith, purity, and obedience and then receive the filling with the Spirit. Commenting on Hebrews 13:8 (“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, *yes* and forever”), F. F. Bruce writes, “His help, His grace, His power, His guidance are permanently at His people’s disposal.”²⁵

“Be filled” is in the present tense. Originally, Greek verbs emphasized action but not time. The time element was developed later. The present tense denotes action that needs to be pursued with persistence or repeated again and again. A. T. Robertson’s explanation of “Rejoice always” in Philippians 4:4 gives the sense of the present tense, “The force of the present [tense] is plain in *chairete*, Keep on rejoicing.”²⁶ I might say, “I get up every morning.” This saying indicates that I not only got up yesterday morning and this morning but also that every morning in the foreseeable future I will be getting up. The same idea is expressed by the present tense in “be filled [again and again] with the Spirit.” The believer should not think that to be filled with the Spirit once is enough to last throughout his lifetime. Rather he needs to know that he must be filled with the Spirit many times throughout his life-span.

For example, the Scriptures record that Peter, the chief disciple of our Lord, was filled over and over again. He was filled on the Day of Pentecost and again before the high priest Annas. When the authorities released him to return to his fellow disciples, the believers prayed in one accord, and Peter was once more filled with the Spirit. When any believer is quietly meditating about God’s wonderful grace, or praying earnestly or if he is falsely accused in court, if he is able to take it by faith, he can be immediately filled with the Holy Spirit and thus be empowered to offer thanksgiving, praise, godly prayer or even a legal defense that cannot be refuted. This can certainly happen, because the Scriptures say that “all things are possible to him who believes” which also includes, “be filled [often] with the Spirit” (Mark 9:23; Eph. 5:18).

Commenting on Ephesians 5:18, Foulkes explains, “Finally the tense of the verb, present imperative in the Greek, should be noted, implying as it does that the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit so that every part of the life is permeated and controlled by Him is not a ‘once for all’ experience. In the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles it is repeated a number of times that the same apostles were ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’. The practical implication is that the Christian is to leave his life open to be filled constantly and repeatedly by the divine Spirit.”²⁷

“Be filled” is in the passive voice. The passive voice means that the subject is acted upon which is quite clear in both the English and Chinese translations. It tells us that to

be filled with the Holy Spirit comes from neither our initiative nor our action. Spirit-filling is not due to our struggle nor our good works. It is completely by His grace that He delights to give. As long as we fulfill the requirements for filling, we can take it and then enjoy it in our praise, thanksgiving and anointed service. His command guarantees our experience. However, we cannot force the Holy Spirit to do anything, even to bestow a spiritual gift. He does not take orders, but distributes “to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). For you who earnestly desire to speak in tongues as evidence of your filling, you need to remember that the Holy Spirit is not a slave who must give heed to your commands. If you forget or neglect this truth, demons may use the opportunity to help you satisfy your desire by giving you tongues like those they give to mediums and witches. Thus when you pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit you must allow Him to distribute such gifts as He wills, because He knows exactly what you need and what you can do and when you should do it.

“Be filled” is followed by the dative of means (“with [by means of] the Spirit.”)

How are we to understand the word “filled” with regards to the Holy Spirit? Is the Spirit a quantity by which we are filled, or the means by which we are to be filled? Some understand Spirit-filling to be our receiving a greater quantity of Him, like the restaurant server filling our half-empty coffee cup up to the rim. However, here it is better grammatically to understand the Holy Spirit as being the means by which we are filled, rather than our receiving a greater quantity of Him.

The Greek language uses case endings to show how a word is being used in a particular clause or sentence. This enables the writer to make his ideas clear and understandable. In Ephesians 5:18, “with the Spirit” (*en pneumati*) is best understood as being a dative of means, denoting that we are to “be filled by means of the Spirit.” If we were to be filled with more of Himself, the genitive case would most likely have been used, since the noun in the genitive refers to the material of filling, as when Jesus at the wedding in Cana of Galilee told the servants, “fill the jars *with water*” (John 2:7). An analogous genitive of causality occurs in Isaiah 11:2: “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him [Messiah], the Spirit [who produces or gives] wisdom and understanding, the Spirit [who produces or gives] counsel and strength, the Spirit [who produces or gives] knowledge and the fear of the LORD,” (retranslated). Hence the Spirit’s filling emphasizes what the Spirit produces in our lives.²⁸

Thus our “being filled by means of the Spirit” denotes that the Holy Spirit is our Enabler or Helper Who fills us with the life, guidance, joy, boldness, ability, strength, insight, liberty or wisdom we need for a particular moment. By means of Spirit-filling, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples at Pentecost the ability to speak in a foreign language (Acts 2:4), Peter boldness and courage to proclaim a crucified, risen Savior to his countrymen (2:14-40), Stephen liberty to preach and courage to remain faithful unto death (6:8-7:60), Philip power to preach and perform miraculous signs (8:4-8) and Paul the faith to call for temporary blindness to fall upon the false prophet and sorcerer Elymas (13:4-12). Time would fail to tell how the Holy Spirit enabled Bezalel, Oholiab, Samson, Gideon, David and all the prophets and writers of Scripture to perform great and wonderful service for God. Further, He has helped many pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries to fulfill their calling with power and glory. Further still, He has

enabled many lay people to deal successfully with their families, jobs and ministries. What the Holy Spirit did in past times He is willing and able to do today. He can enable the preacher to preach and the teacher to teach with liberty and power, and the congregation to listen with open ears to receive blessing and strength from hearing.

The Christian life of service is mostly black or white: we either by faith rely upon the Holy Spirit to help and enable us in all our doings, or we by means of self rely upon our own resources (flesh) to do the job. In doing God's work "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63). Any life lived without the Spirit's enabling results in a spiritual wasteland: useless sermons, dry Bible lessons, stern duties, and unsatisfactory relationships. May we allow God to fill us daily with the attitudes, feelings, strength and wisdom we need to be effective and fruitful for Him.

"Be filled" is in the second person and plural number. This tells us who should be filled. The candidates for filling are not just pastors, missionaries, elders and deacons but every member of Christ's body, no matter how talented or how insignificant. Neither is any preference given to age or gender, because God told everyone in the Ephesian church to be filled. This is a grace that God has commanded every child of His to receive.

Every believer should enjoy the blessing. Not only those who do God's work in leading prayer meetings, teaching Sunday School or Bible studies, but also every mother and father who would "train up a child in the way that he should go" must be filled with the Holy Spirit to insure effective parenting (Prov. 22:6). Here is the testimony of one mother: "A few months ago she...sought it [Spirit-filling] and received it. 'Oh,' she joyfully exclaimed as she told me the story, 'since I received it, I have been able to get into the hearts of my children that I was never able to do before.'"²⁹

F. More Help Concerning the Filling of the Holy Spirit

Ruben Archer Torrey (1856-1928), who worked closely with D. L. Moody and was the first superintendent of Moody Bible Institute, sets forth seven steps leading to Spirit-filling which are stated or implied in Acts 2:38: "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

1. **Repent.** "Change your mind about Christ. Change from a Christ-hating and Christ-crucifying attitude of mind to a Christ-accepting attitude of mind. Accept Jesus as Savior, Christ and Lord...Have you taken this step? Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? Are you relying wholly upon His atoning work for pardon? Relying solely upon the fact that He bore your sins, for acceptance before God (1 Pet. 2:24 ['And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed']...)

2. "The second step: **renounce sin**, all sin, every sin. Here we come upon one of the commonest obstacles to receiving the Holy Spirit—*sin*. Something is held on to that in our inmost hearts we more or less definitely feel to be not pleasing to God. If we are to receive the Holy Spirit, there must be very honest and very thorough heart searching. We cannot do satisfactory heart searching ourselves; God must do it. If we wish to receive the Holy Spirit, we should go alone with God and ask Him to search us thoroughly and

bring to light anything that displeases Him (Ps. 139:23-24 ['Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there by any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way'])...

3. “The third step is found in this same verse [Acts 2:38]: ‘Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins’...So we must humble ourselves to **make open confession of our sin and renunciation of it** and acceptance of Jesus Christ, in God’s appointed way, by baptism. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for the one who secretly takes his place as a sinner and believer in Christ, but for the one who does so openly.”

4. **Obedience.** “The fourth step is...brought out more explicitly in Acts 5:32; ‘The Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him’...What does obedience mean? It does not mean merely doing some of the things, or many of the things, that God bids us do. It means *total surrender to the will of God*. Obedience is an attitude of the will lying back of specific acts of obedience. It means that I come to God and say: ‘Heavenly Father here I am and all I have. Thou hast bought me with a price and I acknowledge Thine absolute ownership. Take me and all I have, and do with me whatever Thou wilt. Send me where Thou wilt, use me as Thou wilt. I surrender myself and all I possess absolutely, unconditionally, forever, to Thy control and use.’” At Pentecost Peter, quoting the prophet Joel, said, “Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:18). “Bondslaves,” those upon whom God promises to pour His Spirit, means “*those who are subject to God, owned by Him body and soul*” and “*who are unconditionally obligated to serve.*”³⁰ This is full surrender and full surrender leads inevitably to being a bondsman to God. Dr. Torrey continues, “It was when the burnt offering, *whole*, no part held back, was laid upon the altar ‘there came forth fire from before the Lord’ and accepted the gift (Lev. 9:24); and it is when we bring ourselves a *whole* burnt offering to the Lord, and lay ourselves thus upon the altar, that the fire comes and God thus accept the gift [‘I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship,’ Rom. 12:1]...There are many who hold back from this total surrender because they fear God’s will. They are afraid God’s will may be something dreadful. Remember who God is. He is our Father. Never an earthly father had so loving and tender a will regarding his children as He has toward us. ‘No good thing does He withhold from them who walk uprightly’ (Ps. 84:11)...”

5. The fifth step is an **intense desire** for the Holy Spirit’s infilling. “Now on the last day, the great day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, ‘if any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living waters.” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believe in Him were to receive” (John 7:37-39). Matthew 5:6 also speaks of this thirst: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”

“What does it mean to thirst? When one thirsts there is but one cry: ‘Water! Water! Water!’ Every pore in the body seems to have a voice and cry out ‘Water!’ So when our hearts have one cry: ‘The Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit,’ then it is that God

pours floods upon the dry ground, pours the Spirit upon us...There are many ministers who are missing the fullness of power God has for them, simply because they are not willing to admit the lack there has been all these years in their ministry. It is indeed a humbling thing to confess, but that humiliating confession would be the precursor of a marvelous blessing...But there are others whom God in His grace brought to see that there was a something their ministry lacked, and this something nothing less than that all-essential baptism with the Holy Spirit, without which one is utterly unqualified for acceptable and effective service. [Dr. Torrey's use of the term 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' is essentially equivalent to Dr. Lin's 'filled with the Holy Spirit.'] They have humbly and frankly confessed their lack. Sometimes they have been led to the God-taught resolution that they would not go on in their work until this lack was supplied. They have waited in eager longing upon God the Father for the fulfillment of His promise and the result has been a transformed ministry for which many have risen to bless God...One of the subtlest and most dangerous snares into which Satan leads us, is that where we are seeking the Holy Spirit, this most solemn of all gifts, for our own ends. The desire for the Holy Spirit must not be in order to make that sublime and divine Person the servant of our low ends, but for the glory of God. It must arise from a recognition that God and Christ are being dishonored by my powerless ministry and by the sin of the people about me, against which I now have no power, and that He will be honored, if I have the Baptism with the Spirit of God..."

6. **The sixth step is to ask** in accordance with God's Word in Luke 11:13: "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." When Christ has been accepted as Savior and Master, and confessed as such; when sin has been put away; when there has been the definite, total surrender of the will; when there is real and holy desire; then come the simple act of asking God for this definite blessing. It is given in answer to earnest, definite, specific, believing prayer...Those whom I have met who give most evidence of the Spirit's presence and power in their life and work believe in praying for the Holy Spirit. It has been the author's unspeakable privilege to pray with many ministers and Christian workers for this great blessing, and afterwards to learn from them or from others of the new power that has come into their service, none other than the power of the Holy Spirit."

7. **The seventh step** is found in Mark 11:23-24: "Truly I say unto you, whoever says to this mountain 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be *granted* him. Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask believe that you have received them, and they shall be *granted* you."

"Here then we discover the cause of failure, in many cases, to enter into the blessing of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. The failure is because the last step is not taken—**the simple step of faith**. They do not believe, they do not confidently expect, and we have another instance of men '**Entered not in because of unbelief**' (Heb. 4-6). There are many, very many, who are kept out of this land of milk and honey just by this unbelief. It should be added that there is a faith that goes beyond expectation, a faith that just puts out its hand and takes what it asks...When I ask anything of God the first thing to find out is:

is this petition according to His will? [‘And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him,’ 1 John 5:14-15]. When that is settled, when I find it is according to His will, when for example, the thing asked is definitely promised in His Word—then I know the prayer is heard, and I know further, ‘I have the petition which I have asked of Him.’ I know it because He plainly says so, and what I have thus appropriated on simple, childlike faith in His naked Word ‘I shall have’ in actual experience...

“Any reader of this book may at this point lay it down, and, if Christ has been accepted as Savior and Lord, and openly confessed as such in God’s way, and if sin has been searched out and put away, and if there has been total surrender of the will and of self to God, and if there is a true desire for God’s glory, to be baptized with the Holy Spirit—if these conditions have been met, you may get down just now before God, and ask Him to baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and you can then say, when the prayer has gone up: ‘That prayer was heard, I have what I have asked, I have the baptism with the Holy Spirit,’ and you have a right to get up and go out to your work, assured that in that work you will have the Spirit’s power.”³¹

As previously stated, **Dr. Wilbur Chapman** (chosen by Mr. Moody to be the vice-president of the Moody Bible Institute) had the experience of being immediately filled with the Holy Spirit the first time he went before God and dedicated himself for Spirit-filling. Dr. Chapman prayed, “My Father, I now claim from you the infilling of the Holy Ghost.” He testified later, “From that moment to this, He has been a living reality.”³²

In another book Dr. Chapman explains how we also may receive the Holy Spirit’s infilling.

“First. One of the most important steps with which I am familiar is this: do not seek to know Him, first of all, that you might teach and preach with power. This is not the way to blessing. Again, do not seek to know Him that you may have the peace of which others have spoken who have known Him in all His fullness. This is not the first step. But rather, bid Him abide in you, **that first of all, He May Have Power Over Yourself...**

“Second. Surrender Fully. To give up ninety-nine parts of the nature and withhold the hundredth is to put a hindrance in the way of the blessing...I reached it [full surrender] by the path marked out by Mr. Meyer when he said: ‘If you are not ready to surrender everything to God, are you ready to say, “I am willing to be made willing about everything”?’ Then He made the way easy. He brought before me my ambition, then my personal ease, then my home, then other things came to me, and I simply said, ‘I will give them up.’ **And last of all my ‘will’ was surrendered about everything. Then without any emotion, for, as Mr. Meyer said, it was ‘faith without emotion,’ I said, ‘My Father, I now claim from Thee the infilling of the Holy Ghost.’** From that moment to this He has been a living reality...I never knew what it was to love my family before [the Spirit’s infilling]...I never knew what it was to study the Bible before [the Spirit’s infilling]...I never knew what it was to preach before [the Spirit’s infilling]...

“*Third.* The third step is found in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, where he says: ‘That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ (Gal. iii:14). You will notice that it does not say, ‘that we might receive the Spirit through faith.’ It is often so quoted. This would be unscriptural, for we have the Spirit. He is with us to abide forever. It is just to believe His Word; and **the third step is one of Faith.** We say to the man seeking Christ, and yet who hesitates because he is without feeling—we say to him, ‘It is faith first, and then feeling after’; and so we say to all who seek the infilling of the Holy Ghost, ‘receive the promise by faith.’”³³

Full surrender, as viewed by Dr. Torrey and Dr. Chapman, is movingly expressed in the hymn by Judson W. VanDeVenter:

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender, Make me Savior, wholly Thine;
May Thy Holy Spirit fill me, May I know Thy power divine.

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.

Refrain: I surrender all; I surrender all.

All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.³⁴

Author and Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, **John Piper** describes a series of five steps he follows in seeking to preach with the Holy Spirit’s power and not in his own strength: Admit, Pray, Trust, Act, and Thank, which he remembers by the acronym APTAT.

1. *Admits* his utter helplessness to preach without the Holy Spirit’s power. He confesses that “apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5) applies to his voice, eyes, mind, love for the people, and awe of God.

2. *Prays* for the divine Helper to give him the “insight, power, humility, love, memory, and freedom [he] need[s] to preach this message for the glory of God’s name, the gladness of His people, and the ingathering of His elect.”

3. *Trusts* in a “particular Word of God utterly essential to fight off the assault of Satan in these moments. Recently I strengthened myself with Psalm 40:17, ‘As for me, I am poor and needy; but the LORD takes thought for me. Thou art my help and my deliverer; do not tarry, O my God.’”

4. *Acts* “in the confidence that God will fulfill His Word,” much as did Elisha. After having been assured that he would receive a double portion of the prophet’s spirit, if only he saw Elijah taken into heaven, “Elisha saw it...and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the waters and said, ‘Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ And when he had also struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over” (2 Kin. 2:12, 14),

5. *Thanks* God “that He has sustained me and that the truth of His Word and the purchase of His cross have been preached in some measure in the power of His Spirit to the glory of His name.”³⁵

Evangelist **Luis Palau** movingly describes how a dramatic turning point in his spiritual life occurred the day he learned in chapel services to “let God be God and let Luis Palau be dependent upon Him”:

During my first semester at Multnomah School of the Bible, Major Ian Thomas, founder and director of Torchbearers, the group that runs Capernwray Bible School in England, spoke at our chapel service.

Ian Thomas talked about Moses and how it took this great man 40 years in the wilderness to learn that he was nothing. Then one day Moses was confronted with a burning bush—likely a dry bunch of ugly little sticks—yet Moses had to take off his shoes. Why? Because he was on holy ground, and God was in the bush!

Here was Major Thomas’ point: God was telling Moses, “I don’t need a pretty bush or an educated bush or an eloquent bush. Any old bush will do as long as I am in the bush. If I am going to use you, it will not be you doing something for Me, but Me doing something through you.”

I was that kind of bush: a worthless, useless bunch of dried-up sticks. I could do nothing for God. All my reading and studying, asking questions, and trying to model myself after others was worthless. Everything in my ministry was worthless unless God was in the bush. Only He could make something happen.

Thomas closed his message by reading Gal. 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” My biggest spiritual struggle was finally over! I would let God be God and let Luis Palau be dependent upon Him.

I ran back to my room and in tears prayed in my native Spanish. “The whole thing is ‘not I, but Christ in me.’ It’s not what I’m going to do for You, but rather what You’re going to do through me.”

That day marked the turning point in my spiritual life. The practical working out of that discovery would be lengthy and painful, but at last the realization had come. We have everything we need when we have Jesus Christ living in us. It’s His power that controls our dispositions, enables us to serve, and corrects and directs us ([“For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure”] Phil. 2:13). I could relax and rest in Him. He was going to do the work through me.³⁶

Jesus expressed the same truth when He said, “The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, **it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work**” (John 14:10 NIV).

Writing of twenty lives transformed through the Spirit’s filling and fullness, **V. Raymond Edman** said of them:

The details of their experience are usually quite different; yet as we listen to their stories and watch their lives, either in our reading or in our contact with them, we begin to see a pattern which reveals their secret. Out of discouragement and defeat they have come into victory. Out of weakness and weariness they have been made strong. Out of ineffectiveness and apparent uselessness they have become efficient and enthusiastic.

The pattern seems to be: self-centeredness, self-effort, increasing inner dissatisfaction and outer discouragement, a temptation to give it all up because there is no better way; and then finding the Spirit of God to be their strength, their guide, their confidence and companion—in a word, their life.³⁷

As believers we must not treat lightly the reality and necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We should diligently obey the Lord's command and appropriate and experience over and over again the mighty power of God working in and through us. Then God can work in our lives exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

In light of the surpassing greatness of the spiritual life and power readily available to those who trust, pray, and obey, it is fitting to conclude this discussion of the application of Holy-Spirit-filling with the initial and last stanza of Adelaide A. Pollard's touching hymn of dedication:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou are the Potter; I am the clay.
Mould me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

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!³⁸

Chapter III. THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's Life Producing Daily the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives

“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1)

“But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task” (Acts 6:3)

“And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5)

“For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord” (Acts 11:24)

Why is it that some believers who have experienced moments of being filled with the Spirit still cannot live the life of a dedicated Christian or come to the full knowledge of God's truths revealed in His Word? Consider some examples.

*Individuals may have the ability to preach with life and power, with many lost souls saved through their ministry, yet their unbridled temper at home scares their children. Many years ago, there was a well-known Chinese evangelist whose preaching was wonderful and powerful and he led many people to the Lord. His temper, however, was another story. One day the youngest of his sons asked his mother,

“Mother, where will Father go after he dies?”

“To heaven,” his mother replied.

The boy sighed and in a depressed tone of voice said, “If father is going to heaven, Mother, I would rather not go there.”

*Other believers may have spiritual gifts of divine healing or even of casting out demons, yet they know scarcely anything about the spiritual edification that comes from reading and hearing the truth of God's Word.

*Some individuals boldly give their testimony in church; but at the same time they proudly boast about their educational and economic achievements.

*Then there are those who, owing to a one-time experience of Spirit-filling, develop a spiritual superiority complex, looking down on their redeemed fellow-believers and setting themselves up as judges and guardians of others' consciences.

*Some women, often more given to speaking in tongues than men, take great pleasure in twisting the truth with gossip and frequently speak unkind words. As a result, the feelings of their fellow believers are hurt and the name of the Lord is shamed. Neglecting daily Bible reading and prayer as well as personal responsibilities, some “tongue-speaking” wives have demanded a divorce from their husbands who either cannot speak in tongues or are not interested in doing so. Such women justify this wickedness by declaring that they are doing God's will.

*Other church members, professing great piety, go the extreme of renouncing all the good and enjoyable things of life, even wholesome concerts or educational pictures in school.

Today, these abnormal characteristics are far too common among believers who claim to be Spirit-filled either on the basis of a single experience or on short-term periods of being filled with the Spirit for the accomplishment of specific tasks for the Lord. Many godly Christians grow pale with fear from just hearing the words “filled with the Spirit” and “full of the Spirit” because of the unspiritual lives of such church members. To alleviate their apprehensions, I prayerfully suggest that a distinction must be made between the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit (received by Spirit-filling) and the manifestation of godly virtues called “fruit of the Spirit” which result from fullness of the Spirit.

A. The Distinction Between the Gifts of the Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit.

The Scriptures tell us that there are gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12-14) and that there are fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). They are not the same, however, because gifts and fruit operate in the spiritual life of the believer for different purposes.

In order to edify the spiritual life and to train believers for the work of the ministry, the Holy Spirit distributes gifts “to each one individually as He wills,” and “to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). Thus, the gifts of the Spirit are given by Spirit-filling and are given to enable us to bring spiritual light and life to others, as the Scriptures say, “He gave some...for the equipping of the saints” (Eph. 4:11-12), that is, to build up Christ’s body—the church. The word “equip” (*katartismos*) is derived from a root which signifies in its verbal form “to mend or prepare” nets for the task of fishing by cleaning, mending, and folding them together (Matt. 4:21), or for disciples to be “fully trained” to be like their teacher (Luke 6:40). Also, it can mean “to restore” to a right position as those Christians in Galatia who had lapsed into sin (Gal. 6:1), or “to complete” what is lacking in the spiritual growth of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 3:10). Thus it follows that God’s chief purpose for the manifestation of different spiritual gifts in the church is not primarily for the benefit or growth of the recipient, but it is for the edification and training of the church as a whole. In a word, gifts are given through Spirit-filling primarily for “the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Concerning this point Leon Morris writes, “Spiritual gifts are always given to be used, and the use is for the edification of the whole body of believers, not some individual possessor of the gift.”³⁹

The fruit of the Spirit, however, is produced by the fullness of the Spirit and is for the benefit of the believer’s spiritual life. Although the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are different in nature, they are not totally unrelated. Possessing both permits a believer to live a heavenly life and at the same time to serve the Lord effectively. When Spirit-filling occurs the result is immediate and the process may be repeated frequently. Spirit-fullness, however, is a process in the believer’s life that takes time to bud, blossom and bear fruit which itself will mature gradually. Spiritual fruit such as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:23) matures step by step and from faith to faith in much the same manner that “the righteousness of

God is revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17), which is from a lesser degree of faith to a greater faith. A believer possessing the fruit of the Spirit gives clear evidence that he is full of the Holy Spirit. Being full of the Spirit is the cause of a believer’s spiritual life, and the fruit of the Spirit is the effect.

Thus the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit are complementary to each other. Being full of the Holy Spirit results in spirituality, whereas Spirit-filling bestows spiritual gifts and empowers the believer for specific service. God desires that the believer may have both a heavenly life and also possess spiritual power and gifts to serve Him with competency and vitality. However, due to their different backgrounds, spiritual environment, and degree of faith, Christians often experience an unbalanced growth. Some, such as Barnabas, have reached great heights in their spiritual lives (“For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord,” Acts 11:24). Others, like Apollos, were given a great ability to preach (“Now a certain Jew names Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.” Acts 18:24). In the early church there were some believers who excelled in both spiritual life and service, such as Stephen, Philip, and Paul.

A lopsided growth in His children certainly does not please the Lord. Unfortunately, this kind of spiritual growth is frequently seen in the church today. Being aware that our spiritual life does not grow evenly should help us to be patient with one another, while enabling us to admit our mutual weaknesses and defects to each other. The individual who is Spirit-filled with the resultant gifts and effectively serves with good results, yet who does not have the Spirit’s fullness for love, patience, kindness, self-control, and so on, is not as fully developed spiritually as our Lord desires. Without doubt, those who have the gift of preaching, casting out demons, and performing many miracles and yet do not let God’s will reign in their lives are not pleasing to Him. They have gifts for service, but because they also practice lawlessness (do evil), they will be refused entrance into the Kingdom of heaven, even though they shall be eternally saved (“If any man’s work is burned up, **he shall suffer loss**; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire,” 1 Cor. 3:15; see Matt. 7:21-23). When the seventy disciples returned from their preaching tour, they rejoiced to report to Jesus that they were able to cast demons out of suffering people. Jesus, however, wanted them to pay more attention to the quality of their spiritual lives than to the results of their work (Luke 10:17-20; also see Luke 22:28-30).

Therefore, even if we have the filling of the Spirit and possess His gifts to work effectively and powerfully, we still must pursue the fullness of the Spirit which will enable us to be kind to one another, to encourage one another and to live a life of love toward the brothers and sisters. Otherwise, although others might be edified by our spiritual gifts and service, we ourselves might be disqualified for the prize of entering into God’s Kingdom (“No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize,” 1 Cor. 9:27 NIV; see 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Matt. 7:21-23; 25:14-30). Conversely, if we are full of the Spirit and have a strong spiritual life, we should also earnestly desire Spirit-filling in order that we might be gifted to edify and equip the church. Our spiritual life shows that we are children of

our heavenly Father. Our spiritual gifts equip us to be servants of the King of kings. Both in their proper proportion will show that we are not an “unflipped spiritual pancake.”

Even though we might suspect that in our abilities we are as talented as Leonardo da Vinci and as loving and kind as the apostle John in our daily lives, it is highly probable that some other brothers and sisters have spiritual gifts and wisdom that surpass ours and whose spiritual lives are further advanced than ours. Since we have nothing that we did not receive from God, let us be kind to one another and encourage each other. Our fellowship through the Spirit puts us into a special association with all those who sincerely follow God. We need to labor intensively through the Spirit’s filling and to honor and esteem our brothers and sisters because we have a mature godly life. If we have not yet arrived at this desired point, we should not despair because the spiritual life is attained through a gradual molding process, rather than through the immediate Spirit-filling that occurs as the need arises to perform a specific task.

How long should the gradual molding process take to make a believer full of the Spirit? Here are some examples. Paul’s first visit to Corinth was probably in the year 51 or 52 AD. He wrote his first letter to the Corinthian believers while he was in Ephesus, perhaps early in 55 AD. God’s revelation through Paul indicates that the believers at Corinth should have been spiritual by the time that he wrote to them saying “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ [52 AD]...for you are still fleshly [55 AD]” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Thus, according to Paul’s thinking, the saints in Corinth should have been full of the Spirit in three or four years. Unfortunately, they were not but were still living carnal lives. Our Savior and example, the Lord Jesus Christ, experienced immediately both the filling with the Spirit (“And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove,” Luke 3:22) and the fullness of the Holy Spirit (“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness,” Luke 4:1). Spurgeon, although he did not use the same terminology that we do, was probably filled with the Spirit at his new birth and his experience of fullness of the Spirit could not have been much later. Let us follow these good examples in order to be powerful servants of God as well as His exemplary children.

B. Obtaining the Fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the result of the baptism of the Spirit, is proof to the believer himself and evidence to others of the reality of his conversion and, in addition, gives the Christian assurance that he is God’s child (“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” Rom. 8:16). The Spirit is also a pledge and a foretaste of his future heavenly inheritance (“Sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance,” Eph. 1:13-14). However, when a believer lacks faith to appropriate His fullness because of the resistance of his old nature, the Holy Spirit is often restricted to a narrow part of his life. This is not what the Holy Spirit wants. Therefore, He will continually work in the believer to bring about the full manifestation of the life of Christ in him, making the virtues we call the fruit of the Spirit visible to the world at large.

The fullness of the Spirit and the believer's daily sanctification, both necessary if Christ is to be fully manifested in his life, represent two sides of one truth. To achieve fullness, the Spirit works to apply Christ's crucifixion to the believer's old nature so that in his new nature and life he may be fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's intent that the believer walk at the Spirit's direction and not live according to the degrading passions of his flesh. On the other hand, to make progress in sanctification, the believer must neither grieve nor quench the Spirit, freeing the Holy Spirit to do His full work in him to produce a beautiful, mature spiritual life. First we will consider the Spirit's application of Christ's crucifixion to the believer's old nature and then look at the believer's obligation to live at the Holy Spirit's directions so that His work will not be hindered.

1. The Spirit desires to apply Christ's crucifixion to the believer's sinful nature—the old self or I. Spiritual fruit in our lives is intimately related to our having been co-crucified on the cross with Christ. The fruit of the Spirit produced by the fullness of the Spirit is detailed in Galatians 5:22-23. Through Paul God tells us that His rich, abundant, spiritual harvest can be produced in our lives because our sinful nature, or old self, was put to death with Christ on the cross, saying "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). So to be full of the Holy Spirit (the cause) and to have His fruit produced within ourselves (the effect), we must appropriate by faith and by reckoning our death with Christ on the cross.

Christ accomplished two things on the cross: one, He bled in order that He might redeem us from our sins. Two, He suffered death in order to put our flesh, our sinful nature, to death with Him. To say it another way, Christ's death achieved two results: He died **for** us so that we can be saved from sin; and, He died **with** us so that we can be released from bondage to our sinful nature by dying with Him. We received justification through His death in our place. We achieve sanctification, however, through the fullness of the Spirit that we gain by our death with Him. As Paul said, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him [by sharing His life now and forever]" (Rom. 6:5). So we must appropriate the death of our own sinful selves with Christ before we can be full of the Holy Spirit in order to manifest Christ through our lives. A. W. Tozer explains appropriating the death of our sinful selves with Christ in this manner: "Christ has made full provision for our deliverance from the bondage of the flesh. A frank and realistic presentation of the whole thing is set forth in Romans six and seven, and in the eighth chapter a triumphant solution is discovered: it is, briefly, through a spiritual crucifixion with Christ followed by resurrection and an infusion of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰

"Be crucified with Christ" is often quoted as a slogan, but it is infrequently achieved; perhaps because believers find it very difficult to find practical guidance on how to make this truth a living reality. Why is it so difficult to die with Christ or even to find competent counsel about how to do it? Because it is not the product of human effort. By our own striving alone we cannot put our old selves to death. We can only receive what Christ has already done for us. Before we can receive the powerful effect of Christ's death, we must each come to know the cunning and almost superhuman power of our old self and to hate its wickedness. In order to know this and to appropriate our death with

Christ, we absolutely must have light from the Holy Spirit. Thus, to die with Christ, objectively by being crucified with Him on the cross and subjectively by realizing it in our spiritual understanding, must be a divine work from beginning to end.

First, to realize the wickedness of “I.” “I” is a frequently used pronoun but most believers do not recognize its real nature. Believers may be aware of the temptations of the world, the treachery and power of sin, and even the tricks of Satan, but fail to recognize the treachery and wickedness of “I.”

“When **I** have done a good deed, **I** boast energetically before others. When **I** have the opportunity to dazzle others and glorify myself, **I** do my utmost to show others that ‘**I** am the best.’ But if **I** miss out on a good deal, then **I** become disappointed and moan in anguish. **I** do not want anyone else to take the position or place that **I** have. Neither do **I** want to share **my** friends with others. When you and **I** share the pleasures of sin, you are **my** blood brother, but if you correct **my** mistakes, you are **my** enemy. In short, the center of **my** life is ‘**self**.’”

Frequently, “I,” can be seen in a superiority complex, self-pity, self-defense, self-indulgence, and various other self-interest activities. The Scriptures clearly point out that the old self has been condemned by the holiness of God, but most believers pay little attention to that and few have the faintest idea concerning the truth of the matter. With great insight Jeremiah said, “the heart is deceitful above all things and is incurable, who can know it” (Jer. 17:9, retranslated).

The flesh (“I” or “self”) does not refer to the atoms of our body but rather to the sinful and degraded nature we inherited from Adam. The Scriptures call it “I” (Gal. 2:20; 6:14), “old self” (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22), “flesh” (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 7:14), “sinful nature,” “own life” and other similar expressions. In the original language “life” is sometimes a translation of the word *psuche* (soul), as in Matthew 10:39 and 16:25. It hates what God loves and loves what God hates. As Scripture says, our “flesh is hostile toward God” and “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” (Rom. 8:7; 7:18). For example, Paul received the highest education a Jew could have, partook of the most advanced culture of his day, and had an exceedingly thorough religious training. Morally speaking, he was blameless, yet he was the one who said, “Nothing good dwells in me.” He knew that his old nature was “hostile toward God,” and that not even a shred of it was pleasing to Him. Our old nature, self, can be compared to the Canaanites, who were destined to be totally destroyed. Attempts to preserve the flesh or take advantage of the flesh will bring as disastrous an end as would overtake a cancer patient who refuses permission for his doctor to remove a highly malignant tumor. The Scriptures repeatedly tell us that God knew our lives (souls or “own self”) have been damaged beyond repair and, therefore, He decided to completely resolve the matter once and for all time by putting our “own self” to death. So He nailed our “own self” to the cross where it died along with Jesus Christ. Death on the cross was the only way to eliminate our old nature—our sinful inclination to independence from God.

Concerning the believer’s crucifixion with Christ, Hodge explains, “The design of our crucifixion with Christ is the destruction of the old man...The service of sin is a *douleia*, a slavery, a state from which we cannot free ourselves; a power which coerces obedience

in spite of the resistance of reason, conscience, and as the apostle teaches, even of the will. It is a bondage from which we can be delivered in no other way than by the death of the inward principle of evil which possesses our nature, and lies back of the will, beyond the reach of our power, and which can be destroyed only by union with Christ in His death, who died for this very purpose, that He might deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and introduce us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”⁴¹

The flesh (“I” or “self”) is what we were before we met Christ. In morality and ethics the flesh is capable of “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Gal. 5:19-21). In spiritual matters, the flesh “is hostile toward God” (Rom. 8:7), causing those who labor in their own resources (flesh) rather than using God-given resources (the Spirit), to be full of pride and boasting over their achievements and to labor to build their own kingdom, or church, or business, in order to benefit themselves or to receive glory and praise from men. For this reason, the Spirit of God admonishes us to imitate Paul: “we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Tasker’s comments here are to the point:

In the exercise of his apostleship, which involves him in a spiritual campaign in which he is always on active service, [Paul] is not at the mercy of the instincts of corrupt human nature, nor does he have to rely on his own human resources. Frail human being that he is, as a man in Christ he is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Here lies the permanent source and unfailing supply of his supernatural strength and courage.

As his warfare is spiritual, so the weapons with which he fights must be those bestowed by the Spirit. *Carnal* weapons, such as human cleverness or ingenuity, organizing ability, eloquent diatribe, powerful propaganda, or reliance on charm or forcefulness of personality, are all of themselves quite unavailing in the ceaseless task of *putting down the strongholds*, in which evil is entrenched. Such carnal weapons may win superficial or temporary victories, but it soon becomes evident that evil has not been driven from its fortresses. The only weapons adequate for the struggle come from God, and He alone enables them to be effective.⁴²

Second, to let the Holy Spirit guide you into the truth. In theory, to allow our old nature to be crucified is a very simple thing. All that is required is to appropriate the reality of our having been crucified with Christ, which is to identify ourselves with Christ’s death on the cross. In practice, however, it is not a simple thing at all. It requires a deeper enlightenment and spiritual understanding about our entire salvation achieved through union with Christ. At the time of our regeneration, when we recognized our wickedness, the holiness and justice of God that would condemn us, and that Christ shed His blood for the remission of our sins, we allowed Christ to come into our hearts and were born again. In the same manner, we must see the wickedness of the “old self” and the mighty power of the cross of Christ to free us before we can know how to be crucified with Christ and how to appropriate this truth by our faith and reckoning. There is no other way to get rid of our old nature. The instant realization or understanding that is

needed to rid us of our old nature is not brought about by our own ability or wisdom, nor is it a decision that can be made by our own will power. It comes from the illumination given by the Holy Spirit whose grace alone can make this truth come alive in our spiritual eyes and enable us to grasp it by faith, after we have asked for it in prayer.

This kind of instant spiritual realization is often preceded by an intense spiritual warfare. Following his new birth, the believer enjoys the great happiness that comes with salvation. He likes to study the Scriptures, loves to pray, and enjoys his fellowship with both God and other Christians. He often senses the blessings of being a Christian. However, his life will not always continue to progress smoothly. The heavenly joy usually lasts six months to a year. Gradually he starts to feel the clouds and rain of life begin to block out the sun. He feels that enlightenment from God's Word is not as bright as it was before, and that sometimes neither His gracious Lord nor the brothers and sisters seem very lovely. Meanwhile the thoughts and habits from his old nature begin to revive causing a conflict within his heart. On the one hand he desires to please and glorify God; on the other he gets enjoyment from the world. Both attractions exert substantial power: one wants to draw him toward the Lord and the other toward the world. He is in a dangerous situation.

Often following a series of painful struggles, he finally realizes that his own efforts to crucify himself with Christ are totally useless. They bring a great deal of pain and repeated failure, but no relief. What he has finally learned is that even his very best efforts and intentions only drive him into a blind alley. The Holy Spirit has brought him to the point of the "death of self," to the very depths of hopelessness where the truth about the "death of self" dwells. Then he comes to understand what "I know that nothing good dwells in me" means (Rom. 8:17). Now he knows why he is powerless to put "self" to death by his own efforts. He begins to grasp the true meaning of the "death of self," which is not to merely subdue the flesh but to do away with it entirely. Maybe without fully realizing what he is doing, he cries, "Lord, I am done with my own efforts. They are worthless. Now I see that I died with Christ on the cross." Thus he appropriates deliverance from his old self by his co-crucifixion with Christ. In this way the Holy Spirit by His illumination and power has led this believer to experience the reality of Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

In the New Testament our crucifixion with Christ occurs in either the aorist (past) or present perfect (action completed with existing results) tenses ("Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*;" Rom. 6:6; "I have been crucified with Christ," Gal. 2:20). In Galatians 2:20 the verb "crucified" is in the present perfect tense, passive voice and the literal translation is "with Christ, I have been co-crucified." In Romans 6:6 the verb "crucified" is in the simple past tense, passive voice, with a literal translation similar to that in Galatians 2:20. While the present perfect action in Galatians 2:20 is already complete and emphasizes the existing results, that is, our co-crucifixion with Christ remains effective to this very day; the action in the context of Romans 6:6 ("Knowing this that our old self was crucified with Him that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin") means that our co-crucifixion with Christ was a decisive act—completed in the past, occurred only once, and is forever complete.

Therefore, it is impossible for us to crucify our “old self” or “own self” because it has already been done. If we could crucify our “own self,” it would nullify our crucifixion with Christ. To pray “Lord, please crucify my old self” or “Please help me crucify my old self” is muddled praying. The truth is that we cannot crucify our “own self,” because Christ has already crucified it. He did the deed over 1900 years ago on Golgotha—long before our own birth, even before our great-great-grandfather was born—when He died on the cross and our “old self” died with Him.

Therefore, we can declare to our “old self,” “You have been crucified with Christ on the cross just as surely as two thieves were crucified along side of Him (“And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insults at Him,” Mark 15:32). By my acknowledgment and by my faith I say ‘Amen’ to the fact that you were put to death a long time ago.” The Holy Spirit will lead the believer to cast himself into the death of Christ and be one with Him. The death (“Now if we have died with Him”) and the resurrection of Christ (“we believe that we shall live with Him”) become the death and resurrection of the believer. J. B. Lightfoot expressed it so well, “I no longer have a separate existence. I am merged with Christ.”⁴³ The realization and acknowledgment of our co-crucifixion with Christ is a start toward the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life but is not the complete journey.

2. If he would be full of the Spirit, the believer must fulfill God’s conditions. The Bible is full of exceeding great and precious promises. These promises all originate in heaven; their contents are rich and their realization is certain. The thousands of promises in Scripture may be classified as conditional or unconditional. Conditional promises are those that the believer can realize only by fulfilling the condition or conditions stipulated. Unconditional promises are enjoyed by appropriating them through faith alone. Salvation is an unconditional promise, that is, no works are involved, whereas the fullness of the Holy Spirit is conditional. There are other conditions that must be fulfilled, in addition to appropriating by faith one’s co-crucifixion with Christ if the believer would enjoy the Spirit’s fullness. Let us see what they are.

Walking at the Spirit’s direction (“Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh,” Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). Following his new birth, the believer must choose one of two principles by which to live his life: one is carnal—living by the energy of one’s own flesh and blood; the other is spiritual—living by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. The flesh and Spirit oppose each other and can never live in harmony. Their warfare for domination of our lives provokes and agitates us again and again. None of us can act in complete independence of them. In the end we must obey one or the other. Either our fleshly nature or the spiritual nature must prevail. So if we want our spiritual nature to win the contest, thereby being continually co-crucified with Christ and constantly full of the Spirit, we must “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16, 25).

The words for “walk” in Galatians 5:16 and 25 do not have the same meaning. The former is formed by the preposition *peri* (around) and the verb *pateo* (walk). On four occasions the Chinese Bible translated it as “parade.” The “walk” in Galatians 5:16 (“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh”) appears to refer to the “journey” aspect of one’s walk, and the phrase “by the Spirit” is a dative of direction. Thus the entire phrase “walk by the Spirit” in an expanded translation would

mean “walk on your life’s journey according to the Holy Spirit’s direction.” The walk in Galatians 5:25 (“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit”) is *stoicheo* which occurs five times in the Scriptures and means “walk according to a set rule or standard.” In Acts 21:24 it is translated “walk orderly.” *Stoicheo* refers to the “training” aspect of one’s walk and can be translated as “walk according to the rule of the Spirit.” So the Holy Spirit gives us direction regarding how to live according to His standard or rule. One Bible translates Galatians 5:25, “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (NEB). But whether the emphasis is on journey or rule both stress the believer’s need to follow the Holy Spirit step by step in his daily life, as the Scripture says, “you are led [continuously] by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18). The active verbs in Galatians 5:16 and 25 (“walk in the Spirit”) denote that it is the believer’s duty to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading. The passive verb in Galatians 5:18 (“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”) gives emphasis to the Holy Spirit’s duty to lead the believer. In other words, He leads; it is the believer’s business to follow.

Consequently, whoever walks continuously at the Spirit’s direction (constantly full of the Spirit) enjoys the blessings of a double release. One blessing is that through the guidance of the Spirit and being co-crucified with Christ, the believer is released from bondage to the works of the flesh (which are listed in Galatians 5:17-21 as fifteen sins representing all the evils of our perverted nature inherited from Adam). The other blessing is release from the bondage of the law (Gal. 5:18). All mankind has a sin nature that cannot satisfy the requirements of the law. But through the fullness of the Spirit we are able to appropriate all that is in Christ Jesus and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit over which the law has no power (Gal. 5:18-23). A life lived in the fullness of the Spirit satisfies the law and nullifies the power and authority of sin. Moreover, it brings forth a rich harvest of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is an impossible feat for the law.

Therefore, believers can enjoy the Holy Spirit’s fullness by continuously receiving their co-crucifixion with Christ and living at the direction of the Holy Spirit who resides within them. This fullness is not brought about by the strength of their fleshly nature nor by increased self-control or manly vigor. It is believing and, therefore, resting in what God has done to accomplish their overcoming life, as a child believes and rests in the goodness of his parents. David’s psalm of a weaned child quietly resting upon its mother’s breast expresses the idea very well.

LORD my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty, nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child that rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me.

Psalm 131

While the weaned child rests quietly on his mother’s bosom, he no longer frets for things he used to find essential. He quietly believes in his mother’s goodness toward him. Only those who live at the direction of the Holy Spirit, resting like the non-fretting child, can enjoy the results of being co-crucified with Christ and constantly be conscious of the Spirit’s fullness. Only when we walk with such an attitude can the Spirit work freely in our intellect, our emotions, our will and all our other mental faculties to inhibit the production of the sins of the flesh and to stimulate the growth to full maturity of the fruit of the Spirit. Then the likeness of Christ will be manifested through our lives in a

glorious manner. F. F. Bruce's comment regarding the Spirit's work is instructive: "As an apple tree does not produce apples by an Act of Parliament, but because it is its nature so to do, so the character of Christ cannot be produced in His people by rules and regulations; it must be the fruit of His Spirit within them."⁴⁴

Not grieving the Holy Spirit ("And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" Eph. 4:30). This brief revelation tells us that the Holy Spirit has the tenderness of a mother. Whenever believers offend the Holy Spirit, He does not withdraw Himself from those in whom He lives, but He does grieve for them. Scofield said, "It is not strange that some have found in this susceptibility of the Spirit to be grieved, but not angered, the mother part of the divine love."⁴⁵ How great is the Spirit's motherly love. According to the context, the command to grieve not the Spirit is not a casual admonition. It is connected to the commandment in the preceding verse concerning unwholesome words. In verse 29, the word corrupt (*sapros*) means "bad, evil, and unwholesome." *Sapros* is used eight times in the New Testament and other than here refers to bad trees, bad food and bad fish. The broader context is indicated by the conjunction *kai* (and) at the beginning of verse 30, and indicates that all evil sayings are in opposition to His holy nature. They make Him sorrowful.

Since the Spirit is holy, whenever believers contemplate or utter unwholesome or evil words, He is grieved. The word translated as grieve in Ephesians 4:30 is *lupeite* and is translated in other parts of the New Testament as "to become sad, sorrowful, or distressed." It is the same word used to describe our Lord's deep agony of spirit in the garden of Gethsemane on Thursday night before He, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, was crucified on Friday. The horrible prospect of taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world deeply grieved and distressed our gracious Lord to the point of death (Matt. 26:37-38). The Holy Spirit is equally grieved over our unconfessed sins. If we deliberately cause the Holy Spirit such grief, we cannot be full of Him.

Consequently, if we want to be full of the Holy Spirit, we must be careful what we say. Unfortunately, all kinds of vile words, foolish talking and jesting can be heard in Christian fellowship meetings, read in church bulletins and publications, and even heard from the pulpit. In some churches if the pastor does not tell jokes to illustrate his sermons, he is considered to be an "old fogey" who is out-of-date. Some Bible studies and Sunday School classes are nothing but fun and games. This grieves the Holy Spirit who said through James, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless" (James 1:26). Those who have ears to hear, let them hear!

Not quenching the Spirit ("Do not quench the Spirit" 1 Thess. 5:19). This admonition speaks of not quenching any one thing (such as prophetic utterances) or of everything as a whole ("hold fast to that which is good") that the Spirit does (1 Thess. 5:19-21). The word "quench" is a command in the present tense that indicates that we should always refrain from extinguishing His activity, and, as verse 20 indicates ("do not despise prophetic utterances"), especially when we are enlightened regarding our duty or faith by Spirit-inspired preaching. Dr. C. R. Erdman wrote, "The warning may be against

neglect or abuse of our opportunities or abilities to testify for Christ, or against failing to act in accordance with the prompting and provision of the Spirit in the sphere of service.”⁴⁶ To defuse the danger of quenching the Spirit, there are two things that we must constantly do: obey God’s commands and wait upon the Lord’s time.

Doing whatever God commands. God not only desires that we be good children but faithful servants as well. He gives us enlightenment by the Holy Spirit from His Word so that we can accomplish His heart’s desire for us to understand His will and to do it. When we believers do not fulfill this responsibility, we both fall short of His glory and lose His blessing.

Scripture is full of believers who lost God’s blessing upon their lives through disobedience. Moses, God’s appointed leader of the Israelites, was full of the Holy Spirit. His meekness exceeded that of anyone upon the face of the earth. He enjoyed direct revelation from God, face to face, and was entrusted to look after God’s family, Israel. God Himself praised Moses for his outstanding faithfulness in His service (Heb. 3:2). Yet Moses disobeyed God’s Word at Meribah. As a result, not only was God’s name not exalted but Moses himself lost the blessing of entering the promised land. Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to be His spokesman when God told him to go. As he fled from God’s will he was rebuked by sailors and then swallowed by a great fish. Without God’s special grace, Jonah would have lost his life, and a multitude of precious souls in Nineveh would have perished eternally. Any disobedience to God that leads to the quenching of the Spirit produces frightening consequences. Thus, it is very important that the disciple always seek the Lord’s way at the Lord’s time and never pursue his own way.

David C. McCasland’s comment about obedience is instructive:

In my daily walk, I’m becoming painfully aware of how often I use my own definitions instead of His. For instance, is my understanding of *obedience* the same as His? Do I carry out God’s commands as given, or do I modify His Word to suit my preferences?

King Saul blatantly disobeyed God’s instructions, then told Samuel the priest, “I have performed the commandment of the LORD” (1 Sam. 15:13). When Samuel challenged him, Saul declared his innocence (v. 20). God saw it differently and removed Saul from the throne of Israel because of his willful disobedience (v. 23).

When I identify myself as a citizen of God’s kingdom, I must follow His definitions without tailoring them to suit my own ideas. That’s obedience. TRUE OBDIANCE IS ON GOD’S TERMS, NOT OURS.⁴⁷

Waiting upon God’s time. Any work pleasing to the Lord must be performed according to His heavenly timetable. Anyone who desires to be full of the Spirit must wait for God’s time to arrive and not try to rush ahead of it. Even a work or event that has the inner qualities and outward appearance of meeting God’s standard, but lacks His timing, cannot please Him (see Ex. 2:11-15; Num. 14:39-45). David was very sensitive to God’s time. When King Saul fell into his hand, he dared not kill him, since it was not God’s time for David to take over the throne. **Waiting for God’s time is not wasting time.** Quite the contrary, much more will be accomplished.

Some may ask, “How can the believer know if it is time to move or if he should still wait?” The believer should not worry about the time but let God attend to it. If God’s children sincerely desire to do His will, God knows very well how to let them recognize His time (“If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself,” John 7:17). **Waiting is our obligation; guidance is His duty.** For the believer who has a pure heart and waits upon Him, God has His way of letting him know the time, just as He let him know about the good news of salvation and enlightened his mind with the Holy Spirit when he was saved. Through making his requests known to God, the believer’s heart and thoughts will unconsciously be driven to understand God’s time and way (“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight,” Prov. 3:5-6; see Phil. 4:6-7).

Waiting upon God is not easy because people are always in a rush. God is not. One who wishes to be full of the Spirit must learn how to wait—wait upon the Lord for one’s marriage partner, for one’s vocation in business, for the field one is going to minister in, for the answer to one’s finances, and so on, so that God’s guidance through His Spirit may not be quenched.

If Abraham had had patience to wait a little longer for an heir through Sarah, instead of taking Hagar in an attempt to help God fulfill His promise for a son, there would be no deadly conflict between Arabs and Israel today. To proclaim the Gospel among the nations is tremendously important, yet to wait upon God’s time and location and how to minister effectively is crucial to becoming a missionary with spiritual results. All young people must remember that even the Son of God performed His ministry in the fullness of time (“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son” Gal. 4:4). Therefore, how much more should a missionary or minister today wait upon God for His guidance, choice of school and place of service. In a word, all believers should wait upon the Lord with patience and do all that He reveals according to His time, His method, His means, and with His power, that the fullness of the Spirit may become every believer’s daily experience.

Conclusion

In our desire to be full of the Holy Spirit, we must remember that our Father loves us greatly and desires only our good. He is constant in His love and loves us with an everlasting love. For His love’s sake toward us, He will always work for our good. As the Scriptures say, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1). We need to firmly believe that He desires to give us the fullness of the Holy Spirit to develop our spiritual lives to the maximum. Second, we must be “confident...that He who began a good work in [us] will perfect it,” that is, carry it to completion (Phil. 1:6). He initiated a spiritual work in us and He will complete it. Like an artist beginning the portrait of a noteworthy person, He will finish what He started. As Paul says in Thessalonians 5:24, “Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass.” God desires that we be full of the Holy Spirit, and He will see to it that we have His fullness because nothing is too difficult for Him. With this kind of hope and faith, it

is only to be expected that the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts will be manifested more fully day by day.

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Appendix—How Our God-given Conscience Enables Us to Know and Obey God's Will for Us

Timothy Lin, Ph.D.

In the mid 1950's near Ashville, NC, an adult male walked into the police station and openly confessed to a murder he had committed 13 years earlier. He gave the deceased person's name and related to the authorities how he had murdered this person by shooting him in the back of the head with an arrow. The police reviewed his story from their files and found that the local coroner had ruled the deceased man's death to be from natural causes. However, when they dug up the dead man's remains, they found a hole in the base of his skull made by an arrow. The murderer was brought to justice, not by the police, but by his own conscience. Just what is this powerful voice that God has placed within man?

The word conscience comes from the Latin *conscire*, a compound of *con* (with) and *scire* (to know), meaning "to know together with," "joint knowledge with another."⁴⁸ Thus conscience is the faculty of man's knowing right and wrong in connection with laws made known to her, which for us Christians is the Word of God, written upon our hearts by the Spirit of God at our new birth (Heb. 8:10-11) and implemented by God-called preachers and teachers, and our personal devotions.

The Old Testament does not have the word "conscience," but the word "heart" expresses the idea. After Adam and Eve sinned, conscience gave them a sense of guilt so that "they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD" (Gen. 3:8). Scripture declares, "David's heart troubled him" (2 Sam. 24:10), and surely a troubled heart was behind David's broken confessions in Psalms 32:1-5 and 51:1-19.

Conscience is innate, implanted by the breath of God that gave man his God-like personality (Gen. 2:7), spiritual understanding (Job 32:8), and conscience (Prov. 20:27).⁴⁹ Romans 2:14-15 declares it is both innate and universal: "For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." Conscience works in exactly the same manner in Christians.

The Working of Conscience

At the Children's Hospital seven-year-old Jimmy was a constant troublemaker. One day a weekly visitor who knew him well said to him, "Jimmy, if you are a good boy for a week, I will give you a quarter when I come back." A week later she again stood by Jimmy's bed and said, "Jimmy, I am not going to ask the nurse how you have behaved. You must tell me yourself. Do you deserve to have the quarter?" There was a moment's silence. Then from under the sheets came a small voice saying, "Gimme a penny." This illustrates that conscience speaks very clearly even in small children, and shows why God admonishes us to "train up a child [by instructing his spiritual understanding and conscience] in the way that he should go" (Prov. 22:6a). This proper training early brings lasting results: "Even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6b).

Conscience has two moral functions: antecedent (before events happen it is a guide admonishing us to do the right and avoid the evil) and sequent (a judge after the act, either rewarding our obedience to God's voice or judging our disobedience). The operation of conscience may be as follows:

Before we act, conscience either encourages us to continue or warns us to stop. While our mind is still considering a course of action and before our will has made any decision to act, conscience either encourages us to go ahead or warns us of the danger of doing so. Often our mind will offer conscience logical, rational reasons why she should change her advice. However, she will never be convinced to compromise her convictions, but will uphold her viewpoint to the very end.

While we are acting upon our decision, conscience quietly waits her turn to speak. Once a decision has been made, our mental faculties busily operate under varying degrees of emotional stimulation. The voice of conscience will keep quiet, waiting to act after the mind slows down and emotions subside.

When the act is completed, conscience will speak, either to reward us or to condemn us. When our emotions and mental faculties relax after completing an action, conscience either crowns us with satisfaction, happiness and courage for what we have done or summons us to the bar of justice where she thunders judgment, which gives us a bad or guilty conscience.

Conscience has no more respect for presidents than for paupers, for the elite than for the illiterate. She caused the bloody tyrant Nero to spend many terror-filled nights wandering the halls of his opulent palace. She also moved Socrates to patiently undergo an unjust trial and to receive his undeserved death sentence with fortitude. Like a decision rendered by the Supreme Court, conscience's verdict, once pronounced, allows no alternative view. Even though she might judge according to an imperfect standard, which may be imperfectly obeyed by the will, she still gives an absolute judgment.

For various reasons, conscience may not speak immediately following the completion of an act. Although conscience's verdict is as absolute as that of the Supreme Court, yet her sentence can be suspended for a time, but not permanently. Once conscience has given her opinion, our will has a right either to accept or to reject it. If her voice is ignored repeatedly, she might retreat, but she will never give up. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, she will repeat her verdict of our past wickedness and

condemn us once again. If she finds no opening to speak during our teenage years, she will try again in our youth, adulthood, or even our very old age. In the event we are able to muffle the voice of conscience throughout our entire earthly pilgrimage, she will triumph in the life beyond, as Romans 2:15-16 says, "Their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

The Need to Listen to Conscience

Once a small boy saw a little spotted tortoise and lifted his hand intending to smash it with a rock. Suddenly, something checked his thrust and spoke to him as clearly as a human voice, saying, "That is wrong!" Not knowing where the voice came from, he went to inquire of his mother. Having heard his story, she wiped tears from her eyes with her apron, and holding him in her arms said, "Some call it conscience. I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey, it will continue to speak clearer and clearer and always guide your steps aright; but if you turn a deaf ear and rebel against it, its voice will fade little by little and leave you in moral and spiritual darkness. The growth of your spiritual life depends upon your hearing and obeying this little voice."

To their great loss, many contemporary Christians ignore God's voice in their conscience. They will listen to spiritual teaching and preaching every Lord's Day, read devotional books daily, pay serious attention to brotherly advice and admonitions, but rarely give full ear to their conscience. Majority rule in the church, ethical instruction in Sunday School and dogmatic preaching in the pulpit have their place, but they cannot take the place of guidance by conscience which comes straight from the Throne of Grace. The Bible passage we read in the morning for devotions may not apply to today's need. The sermon heard last Lord's Day may not help us face this week's trial. The voice of our regenerated conscience, God's heavenly radio within, will always meet our needs precisely and guide our steps aright.

Whenever anyone permits conscience to season his speech and deeds, she makes his words true and just, and his actions noble and right. Under her influence, in 1415 John Huss gave a glorious witness to the City Council of Constance and to Sigismund, King of the Germans, and later Holy Roman Emperor, "To my conscience I cannot be untrue! To the truth of the gospel, I cannot be a traitor! I would rather suffer a mill stone to be tied around my neck and thus to be thrown to the bottom of the sea, than to deny my own conscience and my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ." When Huss was bound to the stake, with straw and wood heaped up around his body to the chin, and flammable rosin sprinkled upon them, "The offer of life was reissued if he would recant. He refused and said, 'I shall die with joy today in the faith of the gospel which I have preached' . . . as the flames arose he sang twice, Christ, Thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me."⁵⁰ In giving his famous speech before the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther, when asked to renounce God's truth, said, "Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments . . . I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the Word of God: I can not and will not recant anything, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against the conscience."⁵¹ How beautiful a clean Christian conscience is. We believers should maintain a good

conscience and live daily by it as did the apostle Paul who “looking intently at the council, said, ‘Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day’” (Acts 23:1). By affirming allegiance to his conscience Paul maintained fidelity to his calling, and a few years later could say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Deadening the Voice of Conscience

Mr. Nathaniel Heywood, a Nonconformist minister, was resigning as minister to a particular congregation due to some doctrinal differences. A poor member came to him and said, “Ah! Mr. Heywood, we would gladly have you preach still in the Church.” “Yes,” he said, “and I would as gladly preach as you can desire it, if I could do it with a safe conscience.” “O! Sir,” replied the member, “many a man nowadays makes a great gash in his conscience; cannot you make a little nick in yours?” However, Mr. Heywood was convinced that “Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he does” (Rom. 14:22b).

Conscience, as Solomon tells us, is the candle of God searching the very inside of man (Prov. 20:27). When a natural man, or a Christian, dethrones conscience by habitual disobedience, she does not abdicate her position. Whenever she gets a chance, she reasserts her claim. Even as a sinner wallows in vice like a swine in the mire, the voice of conscience frequently continues to convict of guilt and warn of judgment. Naturally, such a voice is an unpleasant interruption to the soul desiring the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. In order to avoid the distress and self-accusation from conscience, man’s mental faculties instinctively seek to deaden her voice. At the beginning of the revolt, conscience fights vigorously for her throne in the soul, but after continually losing the battle, she gradually withdraws and leaves the soul in a state of unrest and confusion which may cause a nervous breakdown, or even worse, drive a person insane (“Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house . . . and a spear was in Saul’s hand. And Saul hurled the spear for he thought, ‘I will pin David to the wall’” 1 Sam. 18:10-11) or to commit suicide (“Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse . . . saying ‘I have sinned by betraying the innocent blood . . . and he went away and hanged himself’ Matt. 27:3-5). Conscience caused Herod to turn pale, thinking Christ was a resurrected John the Baptist; (Gaius) Julius Caesar to suffer from lack of sleep; and Felix to tremble at Paul’s preaching.

Moreover, repeated failure to heed the voice of conscience may cause physical illness. Years ago Dr. Lin held a series of meetings in a church. For several nights in succession, he noticed a family attend the services bringing one of their daughters, a girl about 18-20 years old, on a mat. The family placed her in the open area between the first row of pews and the pulpit where she would lie fully prone. When Dr. Lin inquired about the situation he was told that suddenly and quite mysteriously the young lady had become paralyzed, no longer able to walk or stand. After asking if he might talk to her, Dr. Lin met privately with the girl. Following some discussion, she revealed that she absolutely hated her family. Dr. Lin reminded her that such an attitude is a terrible sin before God and should be immediately confessed in order to receive forgiveness and cleansing. When the young

lady did so, a wonderful thing happened! She was able to sit up, then to stand, and walked out to meet her rejoicing siblings and parents.⁵² She had become physically ill because the law of Christian love that God had made known to her conscience was in dreadful conflict with her attitude and emotions. It cannot be overemphasized that whatever is unconfessed is beyond the reach of healing. Further, you cannot confess to God what you will not admit to yourself. These painful consequences teach us to live up to the light that God has given to us in our conscience. John Calvin well said, “The torture of a bad conscience is the hell of a living soul!”

The schemes of the soul to deaden conscience may be as follows:

By abusing oneself with alcohol and drugs. Today some people drink for remedy and enjoyment, but most drunkards or drug abusers seek oblivion in order to hide from the normal function of their souls and thus deaden their conscience—“they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the right of all the afflicted” (Prov. 31:5). Some years ago, crusaders against alcoholism gathered in Istanbul and sadly concluded that, with a very few exceptions, most nations of the world were faced with increasing numbers of alcoholics in their population. In France and the United States during a thirteen-year period, alcoholic addiction had increased 44%. Drug addiction, too, became increasingly prevalent. Can we not say that such a rapid increase in alcoholism and drug addiction is due to mankind’s increasing unrest and anxiety?

By keeping oneself busy all the time. Some people concentrate so much on their business day and night that their souls have no time to heed their conscience’s warnings. Believe it or not, some people dare not rest. They use “too busy” as a magic wand to silence all the echoes of God’s voice within. If they should ever pause and allow their stubborn will to relax its guard, conscience would slip out, make her survey in the different chambers of the soul and remind them of the events in their past and of the catalogue of their sins. The result of this would be thoughts whistling to fear, fear calling to horror, horror beckoning to despair, and saying, “Come, let us torment this sinner!” This may be one of the reasons why devils keep themselves busy since they have no other way to reduce their trembling. No wonder life in the last days is more rushed than ever before (“But as for you Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; **many will go back and forth . . .**” Dan. 12:4).

By taking a logical instead of a moral stand. Men have been seeking logical grounds to excuse themselves for doing evil ever since Adam and Eve were created. To do away with the summons of conscience man uses a variety of ruses to create a logical alibi: complaining about circumstances, placing the blame on other people, hiding behind a superiority or inferiority complex, or excusing self as unable to do any differently. Here are some manifestations of such ruses:

Moses’ self-pity (“Then Moses answered and said, ‘What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, “The LORD has not appeared to you” . . . Please Lord, I have never been eloquent . . . for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” Ex. 4:1, 10)

King Saul's disobedience ("And Saul said, 'They have brought them from the Amalekites for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice them to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed'" 1 Sam. 15:15)

The Pharisee's Corban ("Moses said honor your father and mother . . . but you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban, [that is to say, given to God], you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother; thus invalidating the word of God . . .'" Mark 7:10-13)

Denominational prejudice among churches and Christians' indifference to the lost souls at home and abroad—all sprout from the same ground.

One who wants to puff up his denominational superiority or to avoid his share in missionary work may give hundreds of reasons to support his position, but morally, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13) and "You shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8) destroy all these so-called logical reasons. Excuses keep us immature and underdeveloped in both our conscience and spiritual walk. Thus we remain "men of flesh . . . babes in Christ" instead of growing up to become "spiritual men," as God desires (1 Cor. 3:1).

By standing on good deeds. Using merit to bribe conscience is very common among moral or religious individuals. David's desire to build God's temple, one of Jesus' disciples asking leave to bury his father, monastic life in the Middle Ages, and even those famous robbers in ancient China who used the motto "Carrying out the decree of Heaven—taking from the rich to help the poor" were all attempts to do good to appease conscience. Protestant's church membership, Roman Catholic's rosary and confession before the priests, Hindus' bathing in the Ganges, Muslims' "Allah is God and Mohammed is his prophet," Buddhists' "Nah-mo-o-mi-do-fu," have all been used as instruments to deaden the voice of conscience.

By inventing cultic and heretical doctrines. From the very beginning man has disliked God's authority and this is probably the reason for the development of many cults. In order to separate conscience from her authority—God, some people deny the existence of God, others idealize Jesus' teaching concerning heaven and hell, and yet others simply ignore the reality of sin and the authority of the Bible. Mrs. Eddy's "man is incapable of sin," Spiritualists' "man never had a fall," Jehovah Witnesses' "second chance for everlasting life in the Millennium," Mormons' "the necessity of Adam's sin," are all used for more or less the same purpose: to hush the voice of conscience. What a pity!

A seared conscience does not mean that the consciousness of sin is gone. On the contrary, there will ever be a certain fearful expectation of judgment unconsciously present in the mind until the sinner has found the truth of forgiveness: "If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment" (Heb. 10:26-27). This expectation of judgment causes those with a bad conscience to be "like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked'" (Is. 57:19-20).

The Unbeliever's Conscience

Adam's fall into sin did not deprive him of a conscience that is a part of man's divine likeness. Rather, "To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). "Defiled" is derived from a verb, "to stain," "to color," or "to tinge." Every one has a conscience, even the rudest savages or headhunters, but the unbeliever's conscience is covered with a stain and has become calloused and blind (Matt. 13:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). Even God's heavenly light has a difficult time reaching it, until He "who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness' . . . [shines] in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:6). Conscience judges according to the law known to her. Since the unbeliever's conscience has been separated from God, her original authority, the natural man can judge things only according to his interest, habit, parental teaching, school education, social environment, or by the law that he feels in his own inherent moral consciousness. This explains why Paul's wrongly instructed conscience was so stubborn and fanatical: "I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). This also explains why some primitive tribes can regard their headhunters as great heroes.

The unbelievers' defiled conscience is not only the result of their sinful nature but also by failing to pay attention to conscience's voice, "They, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (Eph. 4:19). Unbelievers, at their worst, not only ignore the voice of conscience, but positively hate and oppose every means which would recover sensitivity to sin, acting as did some of the kings of Israel to God's prophets, the Jews to Christ, and the Communists to churches today. They are like those of whom Baxter writes, "They seem to go to hell as some condemned malefactors go to the gallows, who make themselves drunk before they go, to prevent themselves from knowing whither they are going till they get there." What a sad picture!

Deadening the voice of conscience is a dangerous thing. God warns us to be "[constantly] keeping [*exon-* present participle] faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regards to their faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). Since conscience is knowledge we share with another, that means we know right and wrong in relation to some standard or law. Whenever conscience gets a chance, she will immediately stand up for truth, even though her voice may have lost much of its strength and clarity. Once some boys were brought to the court in Ripley, Tennessee, accused of stealing three watermelons from a farmer's patch. Judge J. R. Lewis rapped his gavel, saying, "Anybody here who never stole a single watermelon when he was a boy, let him raise his hand." The sheriff, the county attorney, three highway patrolmen, court employees, and spectators all lowered their eyes. The case was dismissed. Jesus dismissed a similar case when he was on earth (See John 8:1-11). Likewise, no matter how ignorant and brutal the heathen are, their conscience can be awakened. If ever they have the opportunity to hear God's Word and let the grace of awakening come upon them, their conscience will be awakened by God's grace, cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and recovered just the same as any genuine Christian's; but "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14).

The natural man has lost the true knowledge of God's will by sin's defilement and the continual resistance of his own will, and his conscience is now confined in the strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Unbelievers are incapable of perceiving spiritual things. As Scripture says, the "natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). The truth is, even though the words "God is love" were written in large letters in the sky, it would make little difference "to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind (*nous*) and their conscience is defiled" (1 Tim. 1:15). The unsaved can be very intellectual mentally, yet totally ignorant spiritually. Others may have a great deal of culture, yet they cannot understand God's simple plan of salvation; while others with little or no education may have profound spiritual knowledge. Mankind's spiritual understanding is an innate faculty entirely different from his intellectual capacity. No one can see a sunset with his ears, or hear a cricket chirp with his eyes. Likewise, man with his mental faculty alone cannot perceive God. It is necessary for God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, to grant conscience the grace of awakening that she may be restored with the price paid by Christ on the cross. This divine grace always brings souls a period of distress as in, "when they heard this [that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified], they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:36-37).

Whereas the conscience condemns sinners according to their sinful state, the Holy Spirit presents to them the way of salvation accomplished by Christ on Calvary, even the cleansing power of Christ's blood which cleanses the conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14). The unregenerate conscience says to the sinner, "All your righteousness is as filthy rags." The Holy Spirit says, "Christ will cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Conscience says, "Man himself should be responsible for his sins." The Holy Spirit says, "God's Lamb takes and bears away the sins of the world." Conscience says, "You are not worthy to be saved." The Holy Spirit says, "Jesus Christ promises that he who comes to Him will never be rejected." God's grace enables conscience's voice to pronounce all the verdicts that she had previously suspended, makes the sinner's will submit to truth, his intellect surrender to justice, and his sensibility to grief. The initial reaction of those to whom Peter preached at Pentecost must have been like that of Lazarus who was awakened from the dead by the power of God's voice, but yet found himself bound with grave clothes and surrounded with the stench of decaying flesh. This is the state to which the Holy Spirit brings a sinner's conscience, because "He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:18). Awakened to their sin by the Spirit of God, they feel much like Isaiah when he said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! I am a man of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). Yet it is necessary for sinners to further seek God's grace, as did the jailor in Philippi who asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The only remedy for man's sinful condition is for Jesus to restore the function of this spiritual understanding. As the Bible says, "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding in order that we might know Him who is true" (1 John 5:20).

Thus the first step in restoring the broken relationship between God and man is to restore the function of man's spiritual understanding. Without such a restoration, man has no way to know God. This is why the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles, as well as Christ Himself, laid such great stress upon repentance.

Repentance, Conscience and Spiritual Understanding

In the New Testament repentance (*metanoia*) is a combination of two words: the preposition *meta* meaning "change or alter" as used in metamorphosis (change in shape), and the noun *noia*, a feminine form of the word *nous*, meaning "mind." Biblical repentance is not merely sorrow for sin, but a change of spiritual insight toward God, sin, oneself and spiritual truths. Without the change wrought by repentance, no unbeliever will ever see himself as God sees him, neither will his conscience recognize sin to be sin.

Pharoah, Balaam, Achan, Saul and Judas' confession, "I have sinned" might be remorse but certainly not scriptural repentance, which is not produced by man's resolve or effort. Repentance is God's gift as the Bible explains in Acts 5:31, "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sin." It is the heart-opening granted by Christ, without which Lydia would not have listened intently to the gospel as preached by Paul and be saved—"Lydia . . . a worshipper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul"(Acts 16:14). For this reason Christ came not only to bear our sin, but also to give "us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true" (1 John 5:20). At the moment of salvation, Christ restored the function of our spiritual understanding and put His laws into it, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy, recorded in Hebrews 8:10, "I will put My laws into their mind, and I will write them upon their heart." In this manner, Christ created within us "the law of [our] mind" (Rom. 7:23), which established our conscience according to God's law—to convince us of sin committed, of righteousness impossible, of judgment impending, and thus led us to confess and forsake our sin, and to live in righteousness, which are evidences of genuine repentance.

When the demands of conscience for either condemnation or atonement are met and satisfied by Christ's substituted suffering, the sinner's bad conscience turns into a good one. This is salvation in effect, and regeneration in truth. It is not merely lifting up one's hand while others' heads are bowed and eyes closed, nor just being baptized and received as a church member, but it is having a good conscience which proceeds from a real conversion, brought about by serious confession, and true faith in Christ, by which the forgiveness of sins is obtained and the renewal by the Holy Spirit unto a new life and walk is initiated. Strictly speaking, if the Gospel has not penetrated man's conscience, that is, if he has not experienced the power of God in his moral exercises, he is still outside of Christ and is not saved, no matter how long he has been a church member. This is why the prophets and apostles in the Bible stressed the message of repentance so much. It is the spiritual labor of regeneration. Without such travail, spiritual miscarriage may take place, and the church may produce a member with a defiled conscience, having neither new birth nor spiritual life.

In the spring of 372 AD, a 31-year-old professor, Augustine, was discussing with his friend, Alypius, how to find peace for their souls. Because much of his youthful life had been spent in sexual immorality and impiety, Augustine was extremely distressed because of constant condemnation from his conscience. He left Alypius and went into another part of the garden, lay under a tree and moaned as tears rolled down his cheeks in abundance. Suddenly, he heard a chorus of children's voices saying, "*Tolle, lege; tolle, lege* [take and read, take and read]!" Augustine returned to his friend, picked up Paul's Epistle to the Romans that he had left there a short while before, and opening it he read the first passage his eyes recognized. It said, "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Rom. 13:13-14). As he was reading this, the Lord opened his spiritual understanding, as he said later, "Every doubt was banished!" From that moment until his death, Augustine lived a noble, virtuous life for Christ. God's grace performed for Augustine according to what Scripture promises, "Then He opened their minds [*nous*] to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45) and "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding [*dianoia*—a renewed mind or *nous*], in order that we might know Him who is true" (1 John 5:20).

By means of our enlightened spiritual understanding, we know God and the things pertaining to Him. Our regenerated spiritual understanding perceives God's will in personal Bible reading, biblically-based sermons, and Sunday School edification, analyzes and interprets it, and makes it known to conscience, which discerns God's will on moral and spiritual affairs according to the knowledge received. Spiritual understanding (*nous*) and conscience (*metanoia*) are two in one; whenever one is defiled, the other is polluted, "To those who are unbelieving . . . both their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). They are like the eyes and ears mentioned in Acts 28:26-27: Whenever the eyes are closed (spiritual understanding), the ears are dull (conscience); but whenever the eyes see, the ears hear. God put both within us at our birth, so that following our new creation they might work together as a team to make us God-like—even according to the image of Jesus Christ.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB.

For more discussion on the origin and function of our spiritual understanding and conscience, see *Genesis: A Biblical Theology*, 50-54, and *How We Know God*, 2-4, under the section, "Other Studies," at the Website: www.bsmi.org.

For further discussion on how repentance and faith give us a renewed mind and on how to encourage growth of spiritual understanding and conscience, see *The Kingdom and What It Means to the Life of the Believer*, 35-38, and 46-48, at the Website: www.bsmi.org.

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- ³ W. R. Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), 146-147.
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- ⁵⁰ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960) vi, 382.
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- ⁵² This incident was related to the editor in a private conversation in the early 1980’s.