

A Spirit Filled Church

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I. THE PROBLEM OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

It was the middle of winter and the electricity had been knocked out by an ice storm. As we listened to our battery-powered radio the announcer said, "*The following churches will be closed due to lack of power.*" What a provocative statement! What would the announcer say about many American churches today? They probably wouldn't be closed for lack of *activity*, but lack of *power* is another matter!

Francis Chan – God put His Spirit in us so we could be known for our power. Sadly, most believers and churches are known for talent and intellect rather than supernatural power. What's worse is that we're okay with it.... I'm willing to bet there are millions of churchgoers across America who cannot confidently say they have experienced His presence or action in their lives over the past year. And many of them do not believe they can." ([Forgotten God - Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit](#))

David Platt in his book [Radical](#) has a chapter entitled "Beginning at the End of Ourselves -- The Importance of Relying on God's Power (Subsection entitled - "Dependent on Ourselves or Desperate for His Spirit") – This is where I am most convicted as a pastor...I am part of a system that has created a whole host of means and methods, plans and strategies for doing church that require little if any power from God....I am frightened by the reality that the church I lead can carry on most of our activities....never realizing that the Holy Spirit of God is virtually absent from the picture." ([Radical- Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream](#))

Vance Havner - We are seeing much today of service without the Spirit. There is an appalling ignorance of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in our great church bodies. It is not what is done **for** God that counts, but rather what is done **by** Him, the work of His Spirit through our yielded wills. Programs, propaganda, pep, personnel, these are not enough. There must be **power**. God's work must be done by God's people God's way. The Quakers got their name from the fact that they trembled under the power of the Spirit. At least their faith shook them! Too many of us today are shaky about what we believe but not shaken by what we believe! Too many people assemble at God's house who don't really believe in the power of God. Having begun in the Spirit, we live in the flesh (Gal 3:3)... Never has the church had more wire stretched with less power in it. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down (cp Zech 4:6). Sad to say, we seem not even to know that we have not the Spirit in power. If He ceased His work many church members would never know the difference. Like Samson, we don't realize that He has departed (Jdg 16:19, 20, 21), but we keep "shaking ourselves" in the prescribed calisthenics.

A.W. Tozer some 50 years ago made a similar pronouncement "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the NT church (in Acts), 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

SO HERE IS THE QUESTION... Which 95% would you want your church to be? Mostly natural or mostly supernatural? A humanly energized group of people or a Spirit filled and empowered Church? The popular spiritual song [This is the Air I Breathe](#) aptly summarizes what every believer's daily cry should be...

Your Holy Presence living in me

This is my Daily Bread
Your very Word spoken to me
And I, I'm Desperate for You
And I, I'm lost without You!

Ray Pritchard ([Sermons - Keep Believing Ministries](#)) said that the modern church's "greatest need is for spiritual power" explaining that actually "our greatest need is to know how great our need really is... (and that need) is to know the Spirit deeply and personally. It is never enough to possess the truth. The truth must eventually possess us in order to change us... I remember some years ago hearing Dr. J. Vernon McGee preach a commencement address at Dallas Theological Seminary. He was then in his early 80s and near the end of a long and fruitful ministry. I've forgotten almost everything else he said that night, but one comment has stayed with me. He said that if he were starting his ministry over again, **he would give much more attention to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.** He would preach on the Spirit more frequently and attempt to lead people to depend on his power every day." ([How Can I Be Filled With the Holy Spirit?](#))

And so this overview on the Spirit Filled Church hopefully will transmit some *information*, but it will be for naught if it does not bring about Spirit wrought *transformation* for that is the desperate need of the body of Christ in these last days! The preacher and teacher can (and should) preach and teach the Word of Truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart and implant that Word into the fertile soil of our hearts!

CAVEAT/DISCLAIMER - The mere mention of the Holy Spirit may send shivers down your spine! Questionable practices and emotional extremes in the Name of the Spirit by some have caused many believers to shy away from the Holy Spirit and to become coolly intellectual – espousing orthodoxy but without true orthopraxy! In so doing these orthodox saints have essentially neglected the vital, necessary role of the Spirit in a Spirit filled church. The enemy is undoubtedly quite pleased that many in the Body of Christ are firmly entrenched in one of these two polarized camps -- either fully fanatical or insipidly intellectual! I believe the Scripturally defined "middle ground" is where God wants His church and the goal of this message is to outline the Scriptural pattern of a **Spirit filled church**.

A C Dixon - When we rely on organization, we get what organization can do. When we rely upon education, we get what education can do. When we rely on eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. But when we rely on the Holy Spirit, we get what God can do.

II. THE PATTERN OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

Let's drop the plumb line of God's Word to determine the truth about the **Spirit Filled Church** (and we are just scratching the surface). Any ministry that exalts the Spirit at the expense of exaltation of Jesus Christ is clearly in error for our Lord Himself stated that the Holy Spirit "shall **glorify** (**doxazo** = give a correct opinion or correct estimate of Jesus) Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you." (John 16:14). Jesus explained that "When the **Helper** (**parakletos** = the Holy Spirit) comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify** (**martureo** = bear witness of the truth) about Me (**Not** primarily about Himself)." (Jn 15:26) The [Westminster Shorter Catechism](#) asks "What is the chief end of man?" and answers "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." The chief end of the Spirit of Christ Who indwells every believer (Ro 8:9-note, Ro 5:5-note) is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through us, not to glorify Himself!

(From [Jensen's Survey of the New Testament- excellent resource](#))

A. EXAMPLE OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH IN ACTS

So let's begin with the "birthday" of the Christian church in Acts 2.

Acts 2:1+ "And when the day of [Pentecost](#) had come, they were all together in one place 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled (**pleroo**) the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled** (**pimplemi** - see [Greek word study](#)) **with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." (Thayer wrote "what wholly takes possession of the mind is said to fill it.")

From the diagram we see the church as a body of Christ (Eph 4:12+) was born when the Spirit came on the believers and all were filled. Notice that "**all**" were **filled** and all began to speak as the Spirit was giving them utterance. As **Ray Pritchard** says "The filling of the Spirit is not primarily an emotional experience, and it's certainly not reserved for a few super-Christians. It's nothing more than the normal Christian life when the Holy Spirit is in control." ([Ibid](#)) As discussed more below being **filled** pictures these believers as controlled by the Spirit. We see this sense of filling elsewhere where we observe that what fills a person controls them. And so the Jewish "were **filled** with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus (filling energizes actions!)." (Lk 6:11, cp Lk 4:28,

29). Jesus was gone but (as discussed below) He had fulfilled His promise to the disciples to send the Spirit Who would be His representative and their (and our) empowering Agent. Remember that...

Bethlehem was God **with** us.

Calvary was God **for** us.

Pentecost is God **in** us.

So let's look at the effect the Spirit exerted on the early church, keeping in mind that these Scriptures provide a pattern for the Spirit filled church in our day...

Acts 4:1-4+ (**context** = persecution) And as they (Peter and John) were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple [guard,] and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed (because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand (cp 3000 souls saved in Acts 2:41)...

Acts 4:18+ And when they had summoned them (Peter and John), they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for **we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**" (Why couldn't they stop speaking? Because they were filled with the Spirit, the One Who is to bear witness of Jesus [Jn 15:26]! And how did the church respond to the persecution and subsequent release? They held a prayer and praise service!...)...

Acts 4:24+ " And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to **Godwith one accord**" (Don't miss this picture -- the Spirit filled church is a unified church. The word Luke uses here is **homothumadon** or **homothyadon** which means of same temperament and helps us understand the Spirit wrought unity of the first Church)...

Acts 4:29+ "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence (**boldness - parrhesia**), 30 while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (the fact that this is repeated shows that Acts 2:4+ filling was not permanent, one time event), and began to speak the word of God with boldness (**parrhesia**) (**affects speech**). 32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul (**creates unity**); and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them (**stimulates generosity**). 33 And with great (megas) power (**dunamis**) (Note not just *power* but *great power*! God's answer reminds us of Eph 3:20+ where we Paul reminds that that He "is able [see [God is Able](#)] to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power [What power? Not an impersonal Power, but a power providing Person, the Spirit!] that works [energeo in present tense = continually "energizes"] within us!" Do we really believe this?) the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (fulfillment of Acts 1:8+), and abundant grace (**charis**) was upon them all.

There it is – a Spirit filled church! Let's summarize what we observed about a Spirit filled body of believers:

- (1) They will experience persecution
- (2) They will pray together
- (3) They will be filled with the Spirit
- (4) They will be filled with holy boldness (**parrhesia**),
- (5) They will be unified in heart and soul,
- (6) They will be generous
- (7) They will experience His power (**dunamis**) to proclaim the Gospel (**euaggelion**)
- (8) They will experience abundant grace (**charis**).

Before Pentecost, the disciples were like rabbits. After Pentecost, they were like ferrets! Indeed "**Peter the denier**" (Jesus = Mt 26:34, Peter's 3 denials = [1] Mt 26:69-70, [2] Mt 26:71-72, [3] Mt 26:73-74) empowered and emboldened by the Spirit was supernaturally transformed into "**Peter the Proclaimer!**" (Acts 2:4,14, 36-38+, Acts 4:8+ = "Peter filled with the Holy Spirit"). Before

Pentecost the disciples found it **hard** to do **easy** things; after Pentecost they found it **easy** to do **hard** things. Pentecost was a once in a lifetime occurrence, that "*changed everything*." And remember that if Pentecost was never **repeated**, neither is it **retracted**. In other words, despite the passage of 2000 years, we are still in the era of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit filled church! The potential is there for every church to be empowered by the Spirit to glorify the Name of Jesus (cp Jn 16:14)!

Other Acts passages related to the Spirit filled church...

STEPHEN - Acts 6:3+ "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, **full of the Spirit** and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task... 5 Stephen, a man **full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**... 7 And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people... Acts 7:55+ But **being full of the Holy Spirit**, he (Stephen) gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God... 60 And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**" And having said this, he fell asleep.

Comment: These passages reveal a number of interesting results or effects of Spirit-filling. For example notice that Acts 6 mentions men full of the Spirit and then describes the effect -- "the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly" (Acts 6:7+)

Spirit filled believers (like Stephen) are supernaturally empowered to be witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8+), shining brightly even before those who are filled with hatred (Acts 7:58+, Acts 8:1+ = Saul/Paul) Spirit filled believers are supernaturally enabled to forgive even those who persecute them! Finally note that being filled with the Spirit enables one to die with a peace that surpasses human understanding.

SAUL/PAUL - Acts 9:17+ (Three days after Saul/Paul's conversion) And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and **be filled with the Holy Spirit**... 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."... 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this [Jesus] is the Christ.

BARNABAS - Acts 11:22-24+ And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and **full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

Comment: Spirit filled believers like Barnabas encourage the church to "to remain true to the Lord with a firm resolve of the heart."

PAUL - Acts 13:9-10+ But Saul, who was also known as Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, fixed his gaze upon him, and said, "You who are full (what a dramatic contrast full of the Spirit vs full of deceit!) of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

Comment: Spirit filled believers are armed with the Spirit's power for spiritual warfare (cp the filling in Eph 5:18 which is necessary to carry out Eph 6:10-17. Because the verses are so far apart and are separated by a chapter break, many expositors miss the fact that we are just as dependent on the Spirit to fight an invisible foe as we are to sing to one another!)

Acts 13:52+ And the disciples were continually **filled** (pleroo in the imperfect tense = over and over filled) **with joy and with the Holy Spirit**. (cp "joy of the Holy Spirit" = 1Thes 1:6) Acts 14:1 And it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and **spoke in such a manner** (Spirit empowered) that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. 2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the brethren. 3 Therefore they spent a long time there **speaking boldly** (enabled by the Spirit) **with reliance upon the Lord**, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.

Norman Brown summarizes - From these passages, it is clear that the results of filling vary with individuals and circumstances. But apart from special manifestations, there are always certain results: (1) the experience is Christ-centered, not Spirit-centered (cf. John 16:14); (2) the Spirit will reproduce—not imitate Christ in the believer (Gal. 4:19+); and (3) the Spirit will impart His own spiritual power (cf. Acts 1:8+). In connection with these results, it is important to note that tongues is not a universal evidence of

the filling of the Spirit. Many times in the book of Acts, Christians are described as being filled with the Spirit without any textual mention of tongues as being its manifestation (Acts 4:8, 31+; Acts 6:5+; Acts 9:17+; Acts 13:9+). To argue for the necessity of tongues in relation to filling—in spite of these silent passages—is to break basic rules of hermeneutics... The sum of the teaching of the passages in Acts seems to be that the Spirit-filled life is the normal condition of the believer. Spirit-filling is intended for all Christians as a part of the will and purpose of God for their lives. The evidence in Acts suggests that the filling with the Spirit is both an act and a process; both an event and a life... In order to be filled, the Christian must meet the scriptural conditions of yieldedness. Accordingly, Ironside states, "We cannot be filled by deciding to claim it by faith. Neither are we filled by praying for it (**Ed**: But we can pray to know the "surpassing greatness of His power" Eph 1:18,19+ and that we be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" Eph 3:16+) ... We are only filled with the Spirit as we yield ourselves to God and walk in obedience to His Word... When the Christian meets the conditions for being filled, the Holy Spirit, like an overwhelming force, immediately occupies as much of that person as is relinquished to Him. While the former sin nature is still present, it has been reckoned dead, and the new nature—energized by the Spirit—is capable of producing the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22, 23+). ([The Filling Of The Holy Spirit In The Book Of Acts](#))

What is a Spirit filled church? A Spirit filled church was the normal experience for the church in Acts and is to be the expected experience of every church of every age! And so in simple terms a Spirit filled church is composed of Spirit filled believers, irrespective of their position in the church or their degree of maturity. Every believer has received the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration, for as Paul explained "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." (Ro 8:9+, cp 1Cor 6:19+) So the moment we were born again by the Spirit, the Spirit comes in as *resident*, but when we allow (yield, surrender to) Him to fill (control) us He becomes "*president*" so to speak! In other words, the Spirit comes not just to *reside in* us, but to *preside over* us! As **Wayne Detzler** says "The Christian church can only adequately fulfill its function in the world when every member knows this Spirit fulness."

THOUGHT - God has sovereignly made His provision available. Our responsibility is to make His place available. Are you willing to allow Him to preside and to guide your life? Your answer determines whether you will experience His filling or not! And remember, Scripture teaches that when we believed we received all of the Spirit we will ever possess. The question now is how much of each of us will He possess (fill, control) each day?

**It is one thing for you to have the Holy Spirit.
It is another thing for the Holy Spirit to have you!**

B. EXAMPLE OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH IN EPHESIANS

Let's look at Paul's command to be a Spirit filled church, noting that the verb **filled** is plural which indicates this command is for the entire church...

Ephesians 5:15+ Therefore **be careful** (present imperative = command calling for this to be their lifestyle - something only possible as we yield to the Spirit) how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16+ making the most of (exagorazo in present tense = continuously redeeming) the time (kairos), (why?) because the days are evil (poneros). 17+ So then do not be foolish, but **understand** (sunemi in the present imperative) what the will of the Lord is. 18+ And do not **get drunk** (methusko) with wine, for that is dissipation (**asotia**), but **be filled** with the Spirit, 19+ speaking (present tense) to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing (present tense) and making melody (present tense) with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks (present tense) for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and be subject (present tense) to one another in the fear of Christ.

Comment: **Be filled** in Eph 5:18 is not a suggestion, but a command (it is every believer's responsibility) in the **present tense** calling for Spirit filling to be our habitual practice, our lifestyle so to speak. It follows that no believer understands (or is in) the **will of God** who is not filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:17+) The present tense also underscores the fact that filling is not a one time event but is a repeated action. The implication is that each morning we need to wake up with a sense of our desperate need for Spirit to fill us. The **passive voice** indicates this filling is not something we do, but something we allow the Spirit to do in us. Our part is to acknowledge our need and willingly surrender our will to the Spirit. I would add that given that the Spirit is Holy, we also need to "keep short accounts" and continually confess our sins when He brings them to our mind (1 Jn 1:9+ where *confess* = present tense = as our lifestyle, our habitual practice). Finally, the verb **be filled** is in the **plural** which indicates this command applies to the entire church (as we say in Texas it applies to "Y'all").

Every church (and every member) is to be a Spirit filled church. To not be Spirit filled is to disobey God's command, which of course is a sin!

Charles Swindoll - I don't know of a more important verse in the New Testament for the Christian than Ephesians 5:18—honest, no exaggeration. This verse tells the believer how to live an authentic, empowered life.

Ray Pritchard describes how we are to be filled with the Spirit -- "We need two things—**emptiness** and **openness**. You can't fill a jar that's already full, and you can't fill a jar that is not open. There must be a sense of need—"Lord, I'm empty and I need to be filled by your Spirit." There must be a willingness—"Lord, I'm open to you. Let your Spirit fill me now." The filling of the Spirit is really as simple as that. As long as we are conscious of our need and as long as we are willing to yield to the Lord, we can be filled with the Lord because His power is available to us all day long." Pritchard has coined the term "fillability" to describe our need and desire adding that "when your need to be filled with the Spirit becomes your great desire, you will be filled. Over and over again. Instantly. Every time." ([Ibid](#))

Let's summarize what a Spirit filled church looks like according to Ephesians 5:15-21...

(1) **The members are continually speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.** As an aside, this "fruit of filling" enables one to discern whether he is filled with the Spirit, for out of the mouth comes that which fills our heart (cp Mt 12:34). When the Spirit fills (controls) our heart, wholesome speech proceeds from our mouth. On the other hand, when unwholesome speech proceeds from our mouth (Eph 4:29+), we can be know that we have grieved the Spirit (Eph 4:30+) and at that moment are not controlled by Him, but by our sinful flesh! **How were your words today? If unwholesome, then confess them to the Lord, so that you do not continue to grieve the Spirit.**

As an aside, there are some commentaries that combine *speaking* and *singing* (#2) as one effect, but in the Greek sentence these are separate and distinct participle verbs. Furthermore, when one compares the parallel passage in Col 3:16+ *speaking* in Eph 5:19 parallels "*teaching and admonishing*", which is distinct from *singing*.

(2) **The members of the body continually sing and make melody with their hearts to the Lord** He is to be our audience to Whom we seek to please as we sing, not others in the body.

(3) **The members are always giving thanks for all things.** Notice the two key adjectives - *always* and *all things*! A continual "attitude of gratitude" even in the face of trials and/or afflictions is a strong indicator of Spirit filling, for such a genuine response is not *natural* but *supernatural*! Notice also that since *gratitude* is the antithesis of *grumbling*, the latter response is a sure sign of control by the unholy flesh rather than the Holy Spirit. In Phil 2:14+ we are commanded not to grumble, but the only way this is possible is to work out our salvation in fear and trembling in daily dependence on God at work in us giving us the **desire** and the **power** to do what pleases God (see Phil 2:12+, Phil 2:13NLT+ where "*God Who is at work in you*" = the Holy Spirit!) **Did you grumble today? Are you still grumbling and grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30+)? Then run to** 1 Jn 1:9+ and Pr 28:13+! Remember that "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness." (Lam 3:22-23)

(4) **They are continually willing to submit themselves to each other in the fear of Christ.** When we surrender to the Spirit, He will enable us to willingly surrender our right to be in control in every situation. Spirit wrought mutual submission in the body of Christ will be manifest by a Phil 2:3-4+ mindset (Doing "nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind" regarding "one another as more important than" ourselves, not looking "out for [our] own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."). In short, such submission to one another is not natural but supernatural as the Spirit empowers each member of the body to have an attitude of humility and selflessness.

(5) Notice also that in the **context** of Eph 5:15-17+ being Spirit filled enables the members of the church to **continually...**

(a) **Walk wisely.**

(b) **Redeem the opportunities God provides.** (See related discussion **Redeem the Time**)

(c) **Understand God's will.** (See related discussion - **The Will of God**).

Comment: Note that each of the preceding verbs is **plural** which means Paul is addressing the entire church. In addition each verb is in the present tense which calls for these attitudes and actions to be our

lifestyle, clearly something we can accomplish only supernaturally as the Spirit enables us!

Note also that the **effects of Spirit filling** do not cease in Ephesians 5:21, but successively impact our **marriages** (Eph 5:22-31+), our **children** (Eph 6:1-4+), our **workplace** (Eph 6:5-9+), our **warfare** (Eph 6:10-17+), our **prayer** life (Eph 6:18+) and our power be a **bold witness** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph 6:19-20+). Too many believers forget that in **every area** of our life, we are continually in desperate need of the power of the Spirit, Who alone enables us to live as more than conquerors in Christ!

Relationship of being filled with the Spirit and "filled" with the Word...

Colossians 3:16-note **Let** the word of Christ richly **dwell** (present imperative = command to the entire church [verb is plural] calling for this to be their lifestyle = only possible as we individually yield to the Spirit giving us the desire and the power) within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing** one another **with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness** in your hearts to God.

RELATIONSHIP OF BEING FILLED... WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH THE WORD	
THE HOLY SPIRIT	THE HOLY WORD
Ephesians 5:18, 19, 20	Colossians 3:16, 17
Be filled with (present imperative)	Let... dwell within (present imperative)
The Spirit (of Christ)	The Word Of Christ
Speaking to One Another	Teaching and Admonishing One Another
In Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs	With Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs
Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord	Singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God
Always giving thanks	Giving Thanks
Click more in depth chart comparison between Eph 5:18-6:9 and Col 3:16-4:1	

In summary, **being filled with the Word** is intimately related to **being filled with the Spirit**. The corollary conclusion is if you are not daily eating the Word or **meditating** on the Words you have memorized, you are **not likely** to be filled with and controlled by the Spirit. (cp John 6:63 where Jesus links the Spirit and the Word). **Are you eating** (e.g., **inductive Bible study**) and **"chewing the cud" of (meditating on) the Word of Life daily?** Spiritual health like physical health depends on adequate intake of good nutrition (cp Jesus' words in Mt 4:4, Job 23:12+)! See discussion on the inestimable (and even eternal - see 1Ti 4:8+) value of **Memorizing God's Word**. See online memory verse tool to aid your daily intake of the "bread of life" - **Memory Verses by Topic**.

Charles Spurgeon once said that a Christian's blood should be "*bibline*," bleeding Scripture wherever he or she is pricked or cut (speaking figuratively of course)!

C. EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Let's test the hypothesis of **filled with the Spirit** and **filled the Word** by observing the example of Jesus. Remember that He emptied Himself when He became flesh (Phil 2:6-7-note) and one reason was that He would then give His disciples the example of how a godly man can live in this fallen world. In light of that truth, it is not surprising that believers are repeatedly instructed (even commanded) to follow Jesus ("**Be** [present imperative = continually] imitators... of Christ" = 1Cor 11:1, **be** imitators... **walk** in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us" = Eph 5:1-2-note; Christ left "an example for you to follow in His steps" = 1Pe 2:21-note, "walk [conduct yourselves] in the same manner as He Himself walked" 1John 2:6-note,).

Luke 4:1-4 And Jesus **full of (pleres) the Holy Spirit** returned from the Jordan (where the Spirit descended on Him = Mt 3:16-17, Mk 1:10-11, Lk 3:21-22, Jn 1:32) and was **led about by the Spirit** (Mt 4:1 - demonstrating His willingness to submit to the Spirit; cp Mk 1:12 = "impelled Him") in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted (**peirazo** in present tense = continually tempted) by the **devil**. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry. 3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD

ALONE (Matthew adds "BUT ON EVERY WORD [rhema = spoken word] THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD." = Mt 4:4, quoting Dt 8:3):

Comment: If the Lord of glory was willing to submit to the Spirit for guidance, how can we not do likewise! (cp Gal 5:18-note, Gal 5:25NLT-note).

Luke 4:14-15 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power (dunamis) of the Spirit**; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

Comment: If Jesus' taught filled with and empowered by the Spirit, how can any teacher not be desperate to emulate His example, lest their teaching be wood, hay and stubble?

Peter summarizes Jesus' 3 year ministry in Acts 10:37-38 - "You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed (**chrío**) Him with the **Holy Spirit** (cp Lk 4:18, Isa 61:1-2, Isaiah 42:1, 59:21, Isa 11:2-note) and with **power (dunamis)**, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him."

Comment - Jesus was anointed for ministry with the **Spirit** and **power**. His disciples have also been anointed for Paul says "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and **anointed (chrío)** us is God." (2Cor 1:21). John referring almost certainly to the Holy Spirit's anointing of all believers, adds that we "have an **anointing (chrísma)** from the Holy One" (1Jn 2:20-note) and this "**anointing (chrísma)** which you received from Him abides (or dwells = *meno* in present tense = continually) in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you (John is not saying we don't need teachers at all - see note); but as His anointing (chrísma) teaches you about all things." (1Jn 2:27-note)

Two important observations:

(1) Jesus defeated temptation **filled with Spirit** and **filled with the Word** the "sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (Eph 6:17-note). By His victorious example, Jesus has shown us the secret for triumph in times of temptation---the Word and the Spirit (cp Ro 8:13-note)!

(2) Jesus carried out His powerful ministry in dependence on the **Holy Spirit** and **His power (dunamis)**. How are we carrying out the ministry God has given us -- with the arm of flesh (2Chr 32:8) or the strong arm of the Lord (Ps 89:13, Isa 62:8)?

Comment - Without supernatural power, we can do absolutely nothing of eternal significance (cp Jn 15:16, 15:8). As Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me (separate from the enabling power of the Spirit of Jesus) you can do (Greek = absolutely) nothing." (Jn 15:5) Being saved is not a matter of what we *do for* God, but is what God does *through* us as we allow His Spirit to empower His ministry in and through us. Stated another way, the human spirit **fails** us unless the Holy Spirit **fills** us.

John MacArthur adds "A Christian can accomplish no more without being filled with the Holy Spirit than a glove can accomplish without being filled with a hand. Anything he manages to do is but wood, hay, and straw that amounts to nothing and will eventually be burned up (1Cor. 3:12-15). Functioning in the flesh produces absolutely nothing of spiritual value."

Conclusion: A Spirit filled church follows Jesus' example –

Filled with the Spirit of Truth
Filled with the Word of Truth
Filled with supernatural power

III. THE POTENTIAL OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

Let's join the 11 tremulous disciples in the upper room the night before the Cross, the night Jesus told them that He would go away (Jn 13:33, 36, 14:2-4, 12, 28, 16:5). **Last words!** The last words of anyone are worth listening to especially if they are the last words of Jesus (John 13:1-16:33 = His last words before His crucifixion).

GREATER THINGS IN THIS CITY

John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater**

works than these he will do; because I go to the Father (cp Jn 7:38-39-note;, Jn 16:7 below).

Examples of **greater works** (quantitatively, not qualitatively) are seen in the number of souls gathered into the Kingdom in Acts 2:41 = 3000 and Acts 4:4 = 5000. And so most agree that far more souls were saved in the ministry of the apostles in Acts than in Jesus' entire ministry. (See David Platt's comments below on this "church growth strategy.")

In **Chris Tomlin's** spiritual song [God of this City](#) there is a line that echoes Jesus' prophetic promise that "**greater things have yet to come, and greater things are still to be done in this city.**"

Question: Do you want to be a body of Christ in this city about which it is said they "have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6KJV) for the glory of Jesus the King? I do! Then we must determine to jettison dependence on men's methods and stay desperate for the Spirit's power, for only by His supernatural dunamis can we expect to do "greater things... in this city"!

John 14:16-18 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you **another** (not heteros but allos = another of the same kind!) **Helper (parakletos** = one who stands by to help or render aid, to enable), that He may be with you forever. [that is] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, [but] you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (Post-resurrection = Jn 20:19-21, 22; Then at Pentecost when the Spirit of Jesus came to indwell them)

John 14:26 "But the **Helper (parakletos)**, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Jn 15:26 "When the **Helper (parakletos)** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, [that is] the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

John 16:7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the **Helper (parakletos)** shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

John 7:37-39-note Now on the last 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. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Mt 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples (matheteuo** in the aorist imperative = command conveying a sense of urgency! The only command in the "Great Commission!") of all the nations (compare "all the nations" with Jesus' commission in Acts 1:8 and you see our total need for the power of the Spirit in both passages), baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and **lo, I am with you always (How?** The indwelling Spirit of Jesus! cp parallel "Great Commission" passage in Luke 24:46-48, 49, cp Acts 1:4, 8-note), even to the end of the age."

What was the "church growth strategy" for the Spirit Filled Church in Acts?

David Platt writes "What I love about the picture that unfolds in Acts is the intentional way Luke makes much of God in the way he tells the story. Listen to the language in Acts 2 when Luke records the results of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. He writes "Those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3000 **were added (Ed comment: See word study on prostithemi. Were added** is in the **passive voice** signifying the power to produce this addition came from an external Source!) to their number that day." (Acts 2:41+). Did you hear the passive language? They **were added**. It begs the question, "Who added them?" Go down to Acts 2:47+... and Luke makes sure we get the right answer. There he writes "The **Lord added (prostithemi)** to their number daily those who were being saved." The trend continues. Acts 5:14+ says, "More and more men and women believed in the Lord and **were added** to their number." When Barnabas shares the Gospel in Antioch, the result is that "a great number of people **were brought (prostithemi)** to the Lord (Acts 11:24+). Later, in Pisidian Antioch, a host of Gentiles "who **were appointed (Ed: again this is in the passive voice, implying God appointed them - this is often referred to as the [divine passive](#))** for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48+) This is the design of God among His people. He is giving unlikely people His power so it is clear who deserves the glory for the success that takes place. The story of the church continues throughout the rest of the New Testament, and as I read it, I cannot help but long to be a part of this kind of a scene in the church today. A scene where we refuse to operate in a mind-set that depends on what we can achieve with our own abilities. A scene where we no longer settle for what we can do in our own power. A scene where the church radically

trusts in God's great power to provide unlikely people with unlimited, unforeseen, uninhibited resources to make His Name known as great. I want to be a part of that dream." ([Radical- Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream](#)) (Bolding added)

THOUGHT - Dear reader don't you long to be a part of such a Spirit Filled, Spirit Empowered Church in the twenty-first century! Jesus promised His Spirit would do greater works! God has done great things before and He can do them again. He is looking for churches emptied of self and filled with the Spirit, so that He alone gets the glory!

Conclusion: The potential for the Spirit filled church is a greater harvest of souls than Jesus Himself in His 3 year ministry. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is not just in one person but in every member of the body.

Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord!
Be all thy graces now out-poured
On the believer's mind and soul,
To strengthen, save, and make us whole.
--Martin Luther

IV. THE PRAYER FOR A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

As we yearn to yield more to the Spirit of Christ we will encounter increased resistance from the **world**, our **fallen flesh** and the **devil**, so let us pray without ceasing (1Th 5:17-note, Eph 6:18-note) for ourselves and for one another Paul's prayer for the saints at the church in Ephesus (Eph 1:18-19). Notice that he is not praying for them to be filled with the Spirit per se, to receive more of the Spirit, to be baptized with the Spirit or to experience what some refer to as a second blessing. No, he is praying for the eyes of their hearts to be opened to the vistas of the great riches they already possess in Christ (cp "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" - Eph 1:3-note). In short, he is praying for these saints to possess their possessions, to possess what God has already promised them and made available for them in Christ through His Spirit. How do they possess their possessions? Ultimately by *faith* and *obedience*. (See study of relationship between faith and obedience) Or as the old hymn says "[Trust and obey](#) for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, then to trust and obey." As former Wheaton College president **V. Raymond Edman** used to say "*The Spirit-filled life is no mystery revealed to a select few, no goal difficult of attainment. To trust and obey is the substance of the whole matter.*" So as a body let us boldly approach the throne of grace (Heb 4:16-note) and pray Paul's great prayer. **What might God do with His church if we kept on asking, kept on seeking, kept on knocking** (Mt 7:7-note)?

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that (term of purpose or result) you will know (**eido** = know beyond a shadow of a doubt - an assurance only given by the Spirit to our hearts) what is the **hope** (**elpis**) of His calling, what are the **riches** of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing (**huperballo** = to a degree which exceeds extraordinary!) greatness of His **power** (**dunamis**) toward us who believe (**pisteuo**). These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Ephesians 1:18-19-note)

Comment: Hope (**elpis**) is not "*hope so*" but "*hope sure!*" The great doctrine of Biblical hope speaks of the saint's absolute assurance of a future good. We can be absolutely confident that God will do good to us in the future. The writer of Hebrews describes it as "full assurance." (Heb 6:11-note). The surpassing greatness of His power in context is the same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead (see context - Eph 1:19b-note and Eph 1:20-21-note). One wonders if the saints at Ephesus continued to pray this prayer (and similar Pauline prayers - Eph 3:16-19-note) for one another (something that is really only possible as the Spirit enables us), because in the short span of only about 30 years the church was the recipient of some painful words from Jesus - "I have [this] against you, that **you have left** (**aphiemi**) **your first love**. 5' **Remember** (mnemoneuo in the present imperative = command calling for this to be their lifestyle - something only possible as we yield to the Spirit) therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent** (metanoeo in the aorist imperative = command conveying a sense of urgency!) and **do** (poieo in the aorist imperative = command conveying a sense of urgency!) the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." (Rev 2:4-5-note) **God grant that these words never need to be spoken to your church beloved. Amen**

APPLICATION:

- What would (could) God do with a truly Spirit filled Church?
- What clues do we see in the Spirit filled church in the book of Acts?
- Would you like to be part of a Spirit filled Church?

V. SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are persecuted churches because the enemy knows from experience (he has read the book of Acts!) they are mighty instruments in the hands of the Almighty God. (Acts 8:1+, Acts 4:29+)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Have the Spirit's power enabling them to suffer joyfully, courageously and victoriously (Acts 5:41+, Stephen in Acts 7:55-58+, 1Thes 1:6+).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are praying and fasting churches, seeking God's will, God's guidance, God's glory. (Acts 4:24-30+, Acts 13:2-3+, Acts 14:23+)

John Piper on Fasting - Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel particularly desperate for God. ([Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting](#))

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Manifest a sense of unity in diversity wrought by the Spirit even in times of difficulty and persecution. (Eph 4:3-6+, Acts 1:14+, Acts 2:46+, Acts 4:24+, Acts 5:12+, Acts 15:25+, cp Jn 17:21-23)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES -- Are generous churches (with a heart of charity) whose members are seek to meet the needs (**chreia**) of others in the body of Christ. (Acts 2:44-45+, Acts 4:34-37+).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Exhibit Spirit enabled boldness and power not to DO witnessing but to BE witnesses for Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:31+, Acts 1:8+)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are powerful witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 4:33+ ,Acts 1:8+)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – THIS ONE IS CENTRAL AND CRITICAL! Are Scripture saturated churches ("continually devoting [proskartereo in the present tense] themselves to the apostles' teaching [didache]"), exalting Jesus for the sake of *transformation* not *information*. (Acts 2:42+)

Acts 2:42-47 gives us the prototypical pattern of a Spirit filled church (there was not enough time for sin to infest the body and quench the work of the Spirit). See excellent summary by Tom Nettles - [Empowered by One and the Same Spirit](#).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are composed of saints who continually recognize their desperate need for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit coupled with a deep desire (similar to Ps 42:1-2) for the Spirit's filling. They have "*fillability!*" (Eph 5:18+)

C H Spurgeon on Ps 42:2 - My soul. All my nature, my inmost self. Thirsteth. Which is more than hungering; hunger you can palliate, but thirst is awful, insatiable, clamorous, deadly. O to have the most intense craving after the highest good! this is no questionable mark of grace. For God. Not merely for the temple and the ordinances, but for fellowship with God himself. None but spiritual men can sympathize with this thirst. For the living God. Because he lives, and gives to men the living water; therefore we, with greater eagerness, desire him.

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. (Eph 5:19+)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Sing joyfully from the heart to exalt the Lord. (Eph 5:19+, cp "pure heart" in Ps 24:4 As **C H Spurgeon** says "*The soul must be delivered from delighting in the groveling toys of earth*" [Psalm 24:4 Comment](#))

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Continually express gratitude to God the Father (always, in all things) rather than grumbling and complaining. (Eph 5:20).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Willingly submit to one another, surrendering their rights to their brothers and sisters in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:21)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, daily reading, actively memorized and joyfully meditating on the Scriptures. (Col 3:16)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are enabled by the Spirit to walk wisely (Eph 5:15), to redeem the time (Eph 5:16) and to understand the will of God (Eph 5:17).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES -- Are characterized Spirit filled marriages (Eph 5:22-31-note), Spirit filled families (Eph 6:1-4-note), Spirit filled workplaces (Eph 6:5-9-note), Spirit empowered warfare (Eph 6:10-17-note), Spirit initiated prayer life (Eph 6:18-note) and

Spirit given boldness to bear witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph 6:19-20-note).

Comment: Sadly many believers do not realize that in every area of our life, we are continually in desperate need of the power of the Spirit, Who alone enables us to live life and live it abundantly in Christ and for Christ (Jn 10:10)!

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are supernaturally empowered to engage in spiritual warfare (Acts 13:9-10+).

Comment - As discussed above being filled with the Spirit as commanded in Eph 5:18 is vital for waging spiritual warfare against supernatural beings as described in Eph 6:10-17! Because Eph 5:18 is so far from Eph 6:10-17 and also separated by a chapter break, many expositors miss the fact that believers are just as dependent on the Spirit to fight our invisible foes as they are to sing and make "melody with (their) heart to the Lord!" (Eph 5:19)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Follow the example of Jesus of continually being ready for temptation by being Scripture filled and Spirit filled! (Luke 4:1-4)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Experience the power of God to see souls added by the LORD for His glory not theirs. (Acts 2:47+)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Attract outsiders not to come see their programs but the One the Spirit is exalting.

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Do not depend on their great resources but their great God's unfathomable riches in Christ. (Eph 1:3, Eph 3:8, Col 2:2-3)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are not eager to make a name for themselves but to exalt and glorify the Name above all names, Jesus Christ. (Jn 16:14, Jn 15:26)

Comment: Indeed we are commanded to be the light of the world, but the switch must be turned on to allow the power of the Spirit to flow! (Mt 5:16-note, Php 2:15-note).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Are *radical* but not *fanatical*, depending on God's Spirit, not men's programs. (Zec 4:6)

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES -- Are filled with supernatural **joy** (Acts 5:42+, Acts 13:52+, Acts 8:39+, Acts 11:23+, Acts 16:34+, 1Th 1:6-note).

SPIRIT FILLED CHURCHES – Bear a "bumper crop" of the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note)

A Spirit Filled Church John MacArthur

This sermon was preached in 1973 after he had been pastor at Grace Community for about 4 years and gives a description of a Spirit Filled Church. As we look at Grace Community almost 50 years later, the fruit that the Holy Word and Holy Spirit have born in that local body of Christ is clear and indisputable evidence that MacArthur's people received the Word implanted and over the years manifest the evidence of a Spirit Filled church. Therefore I would strongly recommend listening to this following sermon, especially the first section part of which is also reproduced below - [Satanic Opposition to a Spirit Filled Church](#). While you can read it and get the information, I would also listen to the message as then you will hear the passion with which young Dr MacArthur is preaching to his young church. This was the beginning of a dynamic church which truly touched the world with the Gospel of Jesus as we can clearly see almost half a century later. This is the pattern for a fruitful ministry, a powerful church, a church God uses to transform souls globally. This is a message every church needs to hear, receive and live out in the power of the Holy Word and Holy Spirit for the glory of the Lamb of God. Let it be so Lord in the hearts and minds of all who read, hear and obey Your truth regarding a church filled with the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name. Amen

You remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4:21? He said, "There is coming a day when you will neither worship God in Jerusalem or in this mount," referring to Gerizim where the Samaritans worshipped, "but the one who worships God will worship Him in spirit and in truth." And so Jesus predicted a time when Judaism would fade, where Judaism would cease to be the prevalent issue. And we find in chapter 13 that this begins to be true, as the church is a blending of Jew and Gentile, a rather motley blending even in its leadership, as we shall see, and is really fulfilling the plan of God that Jew and Gentile would be made one body, the middle wall of partition torn down, as Paul clearly indicated in the book of Ephesians.

Now the pattern for the church is very clear again here in [Antioch](#) as it was in Jerusalem. Before the church has much of an effect on the world, it must be strong in itself. And so there is a very careful delineating even back in chapter 11, which we studied a couple of weeks ago ([The First Gentile Church](#)), of the fact that this church in [Antioch](#) was founded in teaching. It had a solid basis. Then from that solid basis it began to move out into the world. And you know that was the pattern in Jerusalem. Jerusalem grew up first of all in itself. Then as best as we can tell, it was seven years after the founding of the Jerusalem church that people were first sent out from there, first sent out toward Antioch. That church grew strong and then established a beachhead in the world. And that beachhead in the pagan world was Antioch.

Then there has been time for Antioch to get strong, and as Antioch has become solid and strong, it's ready to move out and establish new beachheads elsewhere in the pagan world. And that's the way the church is to work. The church is to grow strong. It is to grow virile in the Word of God. It is to grow solid and then when it grows solid then it can have an effect on its world, and it moves out from there sending out equipped and trained men to establish new beachheads. That's the plan of the church.

Now Antioch fits the pattern of the church that reaches the world. You know, you ask the question, "What's the difference between church over here and a church over here?" One is going, it's aggressive, it's dynamic, it's effusive, it's productive, it's zealous, things are happening, it's a where-it's-at kind of thing; and then there's that church and it sits there and languishes on the corner and the spiritual weeds grow, and maybe the physical ones, and nothing ever happens. What makes the difference? Why are some churches dynamic, some churches aggressive, some churches making an effect, and other churches just there?

Well the answer to that, I think, is given in the picture of the church at Antioch. And to start with, just picking up a review, you go back to chapter 11, you find that at the very beginning Antioch got off on the right start. It says in Acts 11:21, "**And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.**" Acts 11:24 at the end says, "**And many people were added unto the Lord**" To begin with it was a saved church. These people were really born again. The church started with real believers. Believe me that's basic, obviously, but you'd be surprised how many churches are devoid of real believers, even in positions of leadership.

All right it had a great start. It also had a great progress. Look at Acts 11:25, "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Paul. When he had found him he brought him unto Antioch and it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught many people." All right they had two good teachers in Barnabas and Saul, and they really learned the Word for one solid year. They had learned it before that because Barnabas had been teaching. They had learned it before that because certain men of Cyprus and Cyrene who had come originally had taught them. So it had a great start. They were really saved. They had a great progress because they were being taught the Word. It also had a great effect. Acts 11:26 says, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." They were so obviously identified with Jesus that people called them Christians. Their testimony was so clear and it was so overt, it was so apparent, that people really identified them with Jesus Christ, and so they had an effect.

Fourthly, they not only had a great start, and a great progress, and a great effect, they had a great attitude. The one pervading attitude of a good church is an attitude of love, and they gave it in Acts 11:27-30. It simply says they sent an offering to the saints in Jerusalem who had some needs during a famine. So here was a church that got off on the right foot. Two ingredients: Love and sound doctrine. And they had an effect on the world. They put a big dent in the world in Antioch. They were solid at the beginning. They were a growing church, a loving church, just the kind of church that God could really move out. And the flag of world missions was about to unfurl fully, and it was going to unfurl right out of Antioch. They were like a sprinter in the blocks waiting for the gun. They were just ready for that first stride to fire out of the blocks and reach the world. And God had done all the preparation. And it took time believe me. Some say that many years had come before this commissioning of Paul and Barnabas. They had time to mature, to be strong.

Now let me remind you friends that this is what has been on my heart for several weeks and I've been sharing it with you. And the Spirit of God just keeps bringing it up in the text all the time.

The fact that a church must begin there, and our commitment at this church is simply that. We have endeavored to commit the Word of God to your understanding, to build you solidly in the Word of God, to firm you up, to establish this church on a strong doctrinal foundation. Once that has been done then the Spirit of God very supernaturally will just begin to make the outflow happen without us having to invent it. And we believe that's what's happening.

I tell you I have a long list every day of people who are continually calling me about outreach projects, mission field projects, witnessing projects, evangelism projects, so that I can't even keep up with talking to all of them. And what's happening is we're beginning to reap some of the dividends of a strong base. And I believe we've grown in missions and we've endeavored to do that. I don't think we've even begun to see what God's going to do in terms of outreach now that the foundation has been laid. That's our commitment. We've been endeavoring to do two things: teach the Word of God and train gifted men. We've seen so many of our young people being trained and growing and now they're ready to go out, and now we're endeavoring to find areas and avenues and opportunities and wait on the Spirit to see where He's going to lead. This is exciting.

Now Antioch becomes for us just that kind of a blueprint. That's exactly what they did. They just grew strong at home, now you're going to see this, and then they waited and prayed. They never invented a program, they just waited and prayed and the Spirit of God moved in and said, "I'm ready to go and here's what I want you to do." And they just took off. But the home base needed to be strong.

**"To begin with the church that reaches the world,
the church that is effective will be a church that is – now watch – Spirit controlled."**

Now what is it that makes the difference? What is it in the church that makes one church powerful, dynamic, and effective and another church – even if it's small or large or middle sized, that isn't the issue, but what makes one effective and one not so effective? What makes the difference? Well to begin with – here's our first key thought. To begin with the church that reaches the world, the church that is effective will be a church that is – now watch – Spirit controlled. Now you say, oh, I know that. Good, then you're going to be able to follow easily what I want to say. Glad you knew that.

The church that is going to be effective in the world is going to be one Spirit controlled. Now that sounds obvious, but believe you me, we would assume that most churches are not operating under the control of the Holy Spirit. And what happens when you don't operate under the control of the Holy Spirit? You produce carnality. You produce the worse kind of carnality, which is a kind of a masked super-religious carnality. You actually harden people into carnality, in the very context of the church, when the church is not under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me show you about the church at Antioch. Go back to chapter 11 verse 24. Now it's talking about two key leaders, the first one being Barnabas. "Barnabas was righteous" – now watch – "and full of the Holy Spirit." Very good. Very important. Now go over to chapter 12 – chapter 13 – excuse me – Acts 13:9. Here's the other key leader in the church at Antioch. **"Then Saul, also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit"** – stop there. Now to begin with, the two leaders of the church at Antioch were filled with the Holy Spirit. That simply means they were under His control. But not only was the leadership under the control of the Holy Spirit – incidentally there were three other key leaders mentioned in verse one, they too were under the control of the Holy Spirit – but so were the people. Acts 13:2 says, **"They ministered to the Lord, fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work under which I've called them.' When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, sent them away."** And here you see the whole church is involved in commissioning them. Acts 13:4, **"So they being sent forth by the Holy Spirit,"** but they had approval and the confirmation of the church at Antioch.

What am I saying? In those verses we see the free flow of the will of the Spirit through the people. You know the two sharpest guys going in the church at Antioch were Paul and Barnabas, and when the time came to send out people to the mission field you would have thought they would have pick Simeon and Lucius. Everybody would have been madly in love, spiritually, with Paul and Barnabas. "We need Paul and Barnabas. You're not going to send the best we've got." See? Not our pastors. But you didn't have that attitude at all. The Spirit of God said, "Send Paul and Barnabas," and so the church said, "Go." What did that say? That says that was a Spirit-controlled body as well as a Spirit-controlled leadership.

Now people, that is the beginning of the church in terms of effect. A church that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is not going to have an effective ministry. Now that is so basic it almost begs the terms to even talk about it or the concept. Now let me show you what I mean by that. Now go to 1 Corinthians 12:7-13. First Corinthians 12, and I want you to just catalog in your mind sort of generally the idea of the importance of the Spirit in the life of the church as you listen to me read these verses. Just key in on the word Spirit, referring to the Holy Spirit. **"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit."** 1 Corinthians 12:11, **"But all these**

worketh that one and very same Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, bond or free, we’ve all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

Now here you have some interesting things, watch. You have the giving of spiritual gifts done by whom? Well the agency is the Spirit. You have the manifestation of the Spirit given to every man. You have the Spirit energizing all the gifts in verse 11. You have the Spirit baptizing everybody into the body in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the Spirit indwelling everybody. Do you know what the life of the church depends on? It depends on what? The Spirit. It is an absolute contradiction to assume that a church can function unless it is under the very direct control of the Holy Spirit. You got it? **A church cannot function apart from that.** Why? Because all the church is, is the combination of the ministries of the gifts of the Spirit. Right? All it is, is the interaction of the energy of the Holy Spirit through human vessels. That’s all it is. If you suck that out of the church you have nothing but carnal clanging going on.

I’ll never forget a Reader’s Digest article about a lady who lived on a hill. And the lady, she lived on a steep hill. She had her car parked this way. She couldn’t get it started. Some of you can appreciate that. And she worked and worked on getting her car started and she couldn’t. So finally she thought, I’ll get it rolling down the hill. Then it’ll just kick in. Well it didn’t. She got to the bottom of the hill and pulled in a gas station. She said, “Something’s wrong sir. Could you check my hood?” And he opened it and there was no engine. Somebody in the night had come along and taken the engine. Now that was a lovely car, had all the right accoutrements, nice upholstery, tires were good, brakes were good, paint job beautiful. Fancy car. Didn’t matter, had to have an engine. You know that’s like the church without the energy of the Holy Spirit. It’s ridiculous. It cannot function.

"The Spirit of God is the energy that makes a church operate"

The Spirit of God is the energy that makes a church operate. Now if a church is going to operate apart from the control of the Holy Spirit, then it’s in desperate trouble. And you know what happens? It operates carnally and it crusts everybody over with carnality. And that’s why some of the crustiest people you’ve ever met are people who have been in the church all their life. Right? And they seem to have kind of – they’ve got – they just kind of got spiritual osteomyelitis or whatever that thing is that hardens you. You know? They just get hard and you hit them with spiritual truth, and it’s like hitting a handball off a concrete wall. It just doesn’t register. There’s no capacity for absorption.

All the features of the life of the church depend on the Holy Spirit, the building of the body, the nourishing of the saints, the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, instruction, loving, sharing, praying, giving, everything is in the energy of the Spirit, is it not? So the very most basic issue in the church is that it be Spirit filled, Spirit controlled. That’s why we say that every believer needs to be operating a Spirit-filled life. Yield to the Spirit. If you don’t do that then you’re maiming the whole operation.

For an illustration of this, the people in the Galatian Church started – there were several churches in the Galatia area. When Paul wrote to the Galatian people he said this, “Are you so stupid? Have you begun in the Spirit and are now made perfect in the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3) What are you doing? You started out right and now you’re functioning in the flesh and there’s no ministry going on. And you know something, some of the big churches function in the flesh and some little churches function in the flesh and size has nothing to do with it. Often some of the big ones are big because they’ve got some Madison Avenue type techniques that result in lots of people. So it isn’t the size necessarily. And some big church are under the control of the Holy Spirit and some small are under the control of the Holy Spirit. That isn’t the issue.

But I’ll tell you, the control of the Holy Spirit is the issue. Whether you’re talking about an individual or a church, it must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Now that’s step one. Watch this one. You say, okay John, how do you get there? What are you trying to say? Here’s what I’m trying to say. Only one way to be under the control of the Holy Spirit – are you ready for this – that is obey His instructions. That’s what the control of the Holy Spirit is. He gives the orders, you obey. Right? Watch this one. Only one way to obey His instruction, know His instruction. Only one way to know His instruction – guess what? – right there.

So what are we saying? We’re saying that any church that is not preoccupied with the saturation of its people in the Word of God will produce carnality. That’s exactly what’ll happen It’s inevitable. I don’t care what else you have, if you are not saturating the minds and the hearts of people with the Spirit of God, who incidentally wrote the Word of God – 2 Peter 1:21, “For prophecy came not in time past by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by” – what? – “the Holy Spirit.” All right this is it: The church that does not teach the Word of God is going to be carnal; the church that saturates its people with the mind of the Spirit will

be a church controlled by the Spirit. And it's that simple. I really believe that. This Bible is the Holy Spirit's Word to us. And you know there are a lot of churches that think they preach the Word, but they don't. It's either so superficial that it never gets to the issue, or it's the incessant gospel, which is beautiful, but it's not going to feed the saints forever.

To be controlled by the Spirit, I must yield to His instruction. To know His instruction, I must learn the Word. I mean I can't follow the orders I don't know. But boy today, churches are lost in a fog of doing all kinds of things but that. I read a book yesterday which I was sent to review, and in it this guy said that he came across two pastors who were having a contest to see who could have the biggest church, and you know the body pack is the thing, see how many bodies you can get in one building. And it begins and ends there. But anyway, they were having a big debate about whether pregnant women count one or two. And they finally resolved the debate by saying that at the fifth month you can count them as two. Boy that is some kind of sick. I mean you know running around trying to find pregnant women to see how many you can add up on your tally. People think that the church is all kinds of different things and they get sidetracked. There are some churches that they just want to entertain people. There are other churches where it's all liturgy and ritual, where it's just a whole lot of holy hocus-pocus and nobody knows what's going on and nothing's really going on anyway. It's a lot of people marching around doing a lot of thing that mean nothing.

There's all different things, and you know what suffers is nobody learns the Word of God. See? The Bible is the Spirit's mind revealed, and if we're going to know His mind we're going to have to read the Word and know the Word. And if we're going to know the Word then we're going to be able to respond to His instruction. Right? Now I don't know if it's possible for me to get more committed to teaching the Word than I am, but I'm getting more, and I'm just am more and more in my own mind convinced that the church must maintain the absolute priority of the instruction of the Word of God, and there's pressures to do other things. This must be our passion.

Now it doesn't mean that we turn it into a class where there's no other expression, but it does mean that this dominates. This is our commitment. There must be a hunger in us for righteousness. There must be a desire for the milk of the Word. Our thirst must be like the heart that pants after the water brook, so pants my heart after Thee that I may know Him. And all this is here in the Book isn't it? That's what it's all about. The church that doesn't maintain the dominance of the Word will be a carnal church and it will not be controlled by the Holy Spirit. And so the commitment must be to get into the Word.

You know I had a joy this week. A dear pastor came to see me of a very large church and a very blessed church. And he said, "John, I want to share with you some things we're doing." and I wanted to learn from him and he said, "I want to learn some things that you're doing." So we got together and we just talked and he asked me how I set up my schedule and what I did and so forth and so on. And I told him about my commitments and things like that, and we got all done after a couple of hours together and he said, "John, I have a lot of things to think about." But he said, "One thing that's happened today that I want to thank you for and thank the Lord for is this." He said, "From our conversation today," he said, "I have a totally new commitment for the priority of teaching the Word, something I've never had before." Of course I, you know, when something like that happens I want to get up and dance, you know good kind like David did. You know, I mean, that excites me. I mean that's what I want.

I got a letter yesterday. I must be on some tapes on the radio back in the East, because I keep getting letters from New York and New Jersey and stuff. I don't know what's going on, but somebody's playing tapes over the radio, and I think it's on Family Radio, something like that. But anyway, I got this letter and I've been getting them almost daily. And yesterday I got a letter from somebody that said, "Dear Mr. MacArthur, I have just heard the message on the priority of the church and the ministry and the teaching of the Word," which I had on another conference I spoke at, and it was on the radio. She said, "Our church is without a pastor," and she named the name of the church. She said, "Do you know of anybody in the country who is committed to these principles. If so please forward their name immediately to the Pulpit Committee." And again I rejoice.

You know if God can use these little tapes going around to inspire people to the priorities of the teaching of the Word, that is a thrill for me. I am so committed to the fact that this is what God wants. All right so you've got to begin with a Spirit controlled church. If you don't have that you're out, and the Spirit controlled church is the one that saturates itself in the Word. The end of all things is not how many people you have or how many happy people you have superficially, but are you teaching the Word so they're growing, you see, and coming to maturity. That's the issue. I would never ask God for one more person anyway. I would be afraid to do that because I haven't made disciples out of the ones He's given me.

All right Acts 13. The church that reaches the world over all is a Spirit-controlled church, but then there are some features and I've jotted down four and the one in the middle we'll talk about next time. But there are four things that really are featured in the church that really reaches the world. The one that makes the difference, the one that is the difference from the normal church, which just is there with very little effect, the church that really makes a profound impact on the world, one, has Spiritual men. Spiritual men.

Verse 1, "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch" – this is in Syria – "certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. Here are mentioned five men. Now these five men were the leaders of the church in Antioch. They're called here prophets and teachers. They are the heart of what went on in Antioch. Believe me Hosea was right on when he said, "Like people, like priest." What he meant was that a people never really rises any higher than its leadership, and that is true. And it lays a tremendous responsibility on the leadership, believe me. God has always put a premium on spiritual leadership. Strong spiritual men were at the heart of this church.

You say, how do you know they were spiritual men? It says in verse 2, "They ministered to the Lord and fasted." And the Holy Spirit flowed freely through them as we shall see next week. They were spiritual men. The church must have this kind of man. If a man is in the pulpit and his life is not under the control of the Holy Spirit, he is not only in trouble himself, he has dragged his whole church into trouble. And this is a fearful responsibility believe me believe me – believe me. I think so often, as I've said of James 3 where it says, "Not many teachers for theirs is the greater condemnation." It's tremendous responsibility. It's a tremendous responsibility alone that we are given to the church for the perfecting of the saints. I mean that alone, the responsibility of bringing you people to maturity, is a responsibility enough to stagger the imagination and then to know that you have greater condemnation for failure. So no man goes into the ministry without knowingly counting the cost and the effect, and yet there's no greater joy in the world. God's standards are high for leadership.

In the 6th chapter of Acts when they were choosing out people to handle the business and wait on tables – you say, boy they could just use anybody who could walk and didn't fall over a lot to do that, serve dinner. You could just about have anybody. And so they said, "Well let's get some guys to serve dinner," because the apostles have got other things to do like teach the word and pray, so we want to pick some guys to serve dinner. Here are the qualifications, "Choose out from among you" – 6:3 – "men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." Wow! Just to serve dinner.

Listen there's a premium on spiritual leadership believe me, God always establishes that same premium. You come into 1 Timothy and you'll find that 1 Timothy 1 he talks about the biblical standards for an elder or a bishop – Titus 1, I mean. 1 Timothy also. And the standards are just fantastic. Let me just share with them – chapter 3 of 1 Timothy. He says, "He must be blameless, the husband of one wife," which means a one-woman man, "temperate, sober minded, good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, doesn't linger long beside his wine, not violent, not greedy of filthy lucre, patient, not a brawler, not covetous, handles his house, his children are saved." All the way down the line, tremendous requirements for spiritual leadership. And I'll tell you it's a fearful thing. We say with the apostle Paul we are what we are simply by the grace of God. Take no pride in anything.

But I'll tell you. God has always set the standards at the very top for leadership. Why? Because you cannot expect the follower to pass the leader. And you know, you can take an individual in a church who's a pastor who maybe, through a failure of his own to get into the Word, finds himself hardened into being carnal himself, even in the ministry. And you know what happens? He transmits that same kind of carnality to the people who are in his charge. A pastor said to me recently, "I haven't been in the Scripture in so long that I am stale." That's a disaster. And that's exactly what he said. That's a disaster.

Now in Acts 13, we have a couple of terms that you might pinpoint in the first verse. These men are called prophets and teachers. Now the terms prophet and teacher are important terms in the New Testament. They're repeated many times. Keep in mind that Barnabas and Saul were also apostles. Barnabas an apostle in a second-degree sense, not as those who had seen Christ but as a sent one of God. But although they were apostles, they are here called prophets and teachers. Why? Because a man who was an apostle was really a combination of all of these things. The apostles were teaching pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists. You know, I mean they were everything rolled up into one. The apostle Paul fulfilled every kind of a ministry, the ministry of a teaching pastor, the ministry of an evangelist, the ministry of a prophet, the ministry of a teacher, and so these words are used here in just a general sense. But the other three men who are mentioned here:

Manaen, Lucius, and Simeon were not apostles and so the prophets and teachers is directly really a definition of their responsibility.

Now let me just mention as a footnote that prophets in the New Testament were very important men. They were ranked right next to the apostles. You remember that in Ephesians 2:20, Paul said that the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. They were men who really were very important to the church. Now mark this note: Generally speaking the apostles were the ones who wrote and transmitted scripture, and they were those who spoke direct revelation, frequently, from God. They were more concerned with theology, with doctrine, with dogma. The prophets, who also spoke very often directly from God, were more concerned with the practical life of a church. Whereas, when Paul spoke for God, he may have rattled off a great theological thing like Romans 6; see, when one of these prophets spoke, he might say God wants Paul and Barnabas to go. In other words practical instruction for the church. They did not transmit what we know as scripture, but yet they spoke directly from God in the area of practical instruction for the church.

Remember the prophet that showed up earlier? He simply announced a famine, which doesn't have a lot of spiritual implication or theological content. They merely instructed on a practical basis, generally. And so that was their distinction from the apostles, who were dealing in doctrine and theology; whereas the prophets, who also taught the word and also studied what the apostles said theologically, then spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance to direct practical issues in the church. I'm sure in a church there'd come a problem and one of the prophets would stand up and give the resolution of the problem.

Now prophets did really two things: They brought new truth, they brought new information to a given situation; secondly, they gave insight into already given information. Their ministry was really that of edification, building up the saints by giving them the things that God wanted them to hear. Now they were not permanent. They passed away when revelation ceased. When God stopped giving direct messages, they passed away along with the apostles. And though prophets do not exist, the gift of preaching still exists. Let me just classify two things. A prophet foretold and forth told. Sometimes it was predictive, but there are only instances of that in the New Testament. Only two times when prophets speak is it foretelling something. All the rest of the time they're simply declaring truth that is not necessarily future prediction. So their ministry was primarily to edify the church on a practical basis whereas the apostles were dealing in theology.

Then there is a group called the teachers. Now they did not pass away. That office still exists. And in the church today there are teachers. There are pastor teachers and then there are just teachers. I am a pastor teacher. Then there are others who are just teachers who are responsible, as God has placed them in the church, for the teaching of the Word of God. They have the office of teacher, and they edify by giving spiritual understanding to spiritual truth. And they are still around.

Now notice who these men were. Barnabas, he was a Jew, as you remember. We won't go into it, because we've studied him before. He was a Jew; he's a Levite from Cyprus. He was a wonderful guy, the son of consolation, a dear and comforting soul. Just the kind of a guy to hold down a wild hair like Saul and be the kind of companion to bring the soft side into everything that happened. And then there was Simeon, interesting who was called Niger. Niger means black. Simeon, called black, and Lucius of Cyrene. If it is true that the Cyrene goes with Simeon also it may be that Simeon was from Cyrene. Cyrene is in Africa, Simeon being a black man in Africa and having come to Antioch. Here's another interesting footnote. The man who carried the cross of Jesus had the same name, Simeon of Cyrene. It may well be this is the same man. We don't know. Nevertheless, isn't it interesting that at the very heart of the early church there was absolutely no racial discrimination. Here is a black man ministering with Jews and Gentiles in the leadership of the church at Antioch. That's the kind of church God designed from the very start.

Lucius, also of Cyrene, which is in Africa, may be the same Lucius of Romans 16:21. We don't know. And then Manaen and he's an interesting character. The others were maybe commonplace people, but Manaen was right from the upper crust who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. Now the term brought up means foster brother, and it was a term used for little kids who were raised in the court along with the princes of the court. Now Herod the tetrarch is not to be confused with Herod who just got eaten by worms last week, obviously. But see, I told you were a lot. There are Herods popping up all over everywhere. After all Herod the Great had ten wives and there are just little Herods all over everywhere. So one of these Herods, this is Herod Antipas here. Herod Agrippa was the one we studied last time. So Herod Antipas when he was raised, he was the son of Herod the Great, Manaen was raised along with him. He was raised in the king's court. He really was a well to do character. So here are the churches, again, a motley and beautiful combination of Jews and Gentiles: Two Jews, Saul and Barnabas; three Gentiles, one of them black, probably one of them very

common, and one of them very wealthy. A beautiful picture of the leadership of the church. The motley arrangement the Spirit of God designed from the very start. So beautiful.

Well five spiritual men, perfect beginning for an effective church, they were spiritual men plugged into what the Spirit was doing. As we see the flow of this text they were really in tune with the Spirit of God. And people this is so important that the man of God who stands in the place of ministry be a man who is under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Second thing, spiritual men lead to spiritual ministry. And this is important. The church that is going to reach the world, the church that is going to please the Lord is going to be one where the ministries are spiritual oriented. And so many people today ask what is a pastor supposed to do? What are his priorities? You know, I from time to time have the opportunity to speak at a conference, and I was asked to speak at the Christian Missionary Alliance Ministers Conference for the West Coast. I don't know when it's coming up, sometime, in San Francisco, and they sent me the subject matter the other day and I just was so blessed. You know? It said, "Your subject is the priority of the Word in the ministry." Oh, that's just right, rang my chimes, right on the spot. But you see there's a tremendous need. And the letter went on to say how that they felt that the men really needed to understand this priority.

You see people are asking today, what is the ministry? A man said to me in the ministry the other day, he said, "John, I have to admit this. I have not maintained the priority of the Word for many years. I have failed in this area. God helping me, it's going to be changed." You see sometimes people get sidetracked off into things that don't matter. The responsibility of spiritual men is spiritual ministry. Nothing else. So many people get all sidetracked into all kinds of little piddley responsibilities and they forget the spiritual priority of the Word and prayer. Look at verse 2. What did these guys do? Want to know what ministers are supposed to do? Here's five of them. What did they do? They ministered to the Lord and fasted. Stop right there. They ministered to the Lord and fasted. You know what the Bible said in [Acts 6:4](#) that the apostles wanted to give themselves to? To the ministry of the Word and prayer. That's what these guys did. That's what every minister really ought to do as a priority. Oh it doesn't mean that you become isolated, you live in an ivory tower, and you make no contact with people. It simply means you understand your priorities.

Let me emphasize first of all the term ministered is very, very interesting. The word in the Greek leitourgeō from which we get the word liturgy, which is kind of a prostitution of a meaning really. We've made it into a kind of a form without any content. But the word originally meant to discharge a public office. If you got elected to an office publicly, you were to carry out your liturgy. That is you were to fulfill your office. If a guy was given the office of a ruler, he was to rule well. In other words it was to fulfill the obligation of his office. That's what the word meant, and that's exactly what it means here. When they had been placed in leadership in that church, they fulfilled the office God gave them. And what did God intend for his leaders to do? Minister in the Word and pray. Right? And they did it unto the Lord. They fulfilled the discharge of their office. They did this, as Paul put it, they made fool proof of the ministry. That's the thing. Now watch, all of our service – and this is a very salient point – all of our service that we do in the ministry and all of the service that you do is seen as a sacrifice offered to God. The term ministry here is also a term used in terms of priestly service to God. They saw their ministry – watch this – as an offering to God, to Jesus Christ Himself.

Let me show you an interesting verse that really, if you think about it long enough, ought to change your life.¹ [Peter 2:5](#). Now Peter talking to the believers says, "You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." Now we know that we're the habitation of the Spirit. Right? A spiritual temple. Now watch this, "A holy priesthood." Did you know you're a priest? What does a priest do? What's the one primary role of a priest? Offer things to God. Sacrifices, right? Sure. You say, well this is the new covenant, MacArthur. Don't you know we don't make sacrifices anymore? Yes, we do. You say, what are they? Here they come. "To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God." Now stop right there. As a Christian you are a priest offering sacrifices to God.

In Hebrews 13 it tells you what kind of sacrifices. The sacrifice of praise from your lips, the sacrifice of good deeds and sharing one with another, and with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Now watch. You as a Christian, everything you do in your life – watch it – everything you do in your life is an offering to Jesus Christ. What kind of sacrifices are you, the believer priest, offering? Think about it. Think about it. Do you see your life as a priesthood to God? And do you see every deed that you do in your life as an offering, which you take into the Holy of Holies and offer to Jesus Christ? If you do it ought to change the way you do some things.

You're a Sunday school teacher. In our church you're an Acts teacher, and you've got a class of five little girls. Do you see the teaching of that class as a sacrifice offering into the hands of Jesus Christ? If you don't, you're looking at it wrongly. That's exactly what it is. You're an usher. Do you see the ministry that you afford the

church in that way as an offering presented to Jesus Christ? If you don't, you're looking at it wrongly. Maybe you have the gift of showing mercy and just your availability to visit the hospitals and see the sick and pray with them and minister to them, do you see that as a sacrifice offered to Jesus Christ? It is. We spend all of our lives as Christians as priests offering sacrifices to Christ. Start looking back and checking out some of the things you offered Him. It's kind of sad isn't it? Notice what it says. It doesn't say they ministered to the people. It says they ministered – what? – to the Lord. They ministered to the Lord. All their ministry was seen as a spiritual sacrifice to Christ.

As I spend some times on my knees before I preach sometimes I need to be reminded of this. Lord, I'm not going in to preach to those people. I'm going in there to offer this message to You as a sacrifice. Here is my offering to You. And I'll be very honest with you. I care about what you think about what I say, because I want it to do something in your life. I don't care that you always agree with me, because if you always agreed with me then you wouldn't need what I tell you. If I'm not changing some of your attitudes, then I have no use. And I think about the fact that you hear me, and I think about the fact that those eternal tapes go on and on and people keep hearing. But you know what I think about most when I preach? I think about the fact that God hears, and that's the thing that continually haunts my mind. People say to me sometimes, "John, why do you study so often and so long? Why don't you just ease up?" My wife is particularly good at saying that, bless her heart. Why do you think you have to study all of that and do – you can go in there without all of that. You know why I do that? Not because I know you'll know the difference, but I know God will. Because all of you are not in a position to know whether I rightly divide the Word or not, but He is.

And that's why the apostle Paul said to Timothy, "Study to show yourself approved unto men." That what he said? Unto whom? God knows whether I'm studying or not. And you know something? It grieves my heart to hear men stand up in a pulpit and declare something from the Word of God that is not right, that is not accurate, that is not true. And that's just my own particular concern. That when I stand in this pulpit the greatest fear in my life is not that you wouldn't understand it or you wouldn't like the sermon, but that God would not be well pleased with this which I offer Him as my spiritual service. That's on my heart.

In Malachi this is illustrated by what Israel offered God. In Malachi 1:13 – and incidentally don't construe that to mean that I'm always infallible. Malachi 1:13. You know, the people in Israel had really just gone down the drain spiritually, and they got to the place where they didn't even want religion. And so verse 13, he says, the prophet says, "You said, 'Behold what a weariness.'" You know what they're saying? Oh religion, what a drag. Religion, going down to that temple. "And you have sniffed at it." You know? Religion, what a waste. But you went through the motions, "and you brought that which was torn, and lame, and sick." What were they to bring to God? One word, it starts with B. The best. What did they bring? Lame and sick. God says, "Should I accept this of your hand?" Am I going to accept that kind of an offering? "Cursed be the deceiver that has in his flock a male, the very best, and vows" – makes a big religious pretense – "and sacrifices unto the Lord a corrupt thing. 'I'm a great king and I'm terrible,' He says." Don't mess with me. God says if you're going to bring Me an offering, don't bring me a cripple or corrupt one. You bring Me the best you've got or don't bring Me anything.

Christian, do you see your life as that? You're a priest. Everything you offer is service to God. They ministered to the Lord. That's what priests did. That's a word used of the priest. They ministered to the Lord. They offered up spiritual sacrifices. When they studied they studied to show themselves what? Approved unto God. When they counseled they counseled as unto the Lord that He might be pleased. Oh my, this is so germane to any kind of ministry. You know if Jesus arrived this morning and came in, what a joy it would be and He just stood here and we would be all overwhelmed. And then He just opened His arms and said, "You whom I love here at Grace Church I have a request. I would like you to bring Me an offering. I'd like each of you to bring Me something. Bring Me an offering." What would you bring? We would get it together to the best that we had, wouldn't we? You know what the Bible says? He is asking and He's asking through me who stands in His place. Give Him the best.

Here's where to start, Romans 12:1. "Present your" – what? – "your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service." The first sacrifice He wants is you, all of you. That's well pleasing. Then the praise of your lips, the love of your life, and all these other ministries. Well these guys ministered as unto the Lord. Let me give you an illustration. Wives do you realize that how you submit to your husband – I'm just picking this one out at random. There are many. Wives how you submit to your husband is a sacrifice to Jesus? What are you offering Him in that area? You say, where do you get that? Right out of Ephesians 5:22. Listen, it says this, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands" – zap, here it comes – "as unto the Lord." It's an offering to Him.

Husbands do you know that how you love your wife is a spiritual sacrifice to Christ? Just practical. How you minister your spiritual gift is a spiritual sacrifice to Christ. How you give in terms of the offering and your giving of your life and your time and your money is a spiritual sacrifice to Jesus Christ. What are you giving Him? Leftovers, residue, corrupt stuff or the very best. Colossians 3:23 says this, "Whatever you do, do it with all your heart, heartily" – watch – "as unto the Lord, not unto men." You know that if a guy in the ministry, or any Christian, just tried to do what people wanted him to do he'd go nuts, because everybody wants something different. So you know what you have to do? You just have to spend your time saying, God what do You want me to do? How can I give you spiritual service?

You say, well you can't just go ignoring people. Listen you give the right kind of spiritual service to God and the people will get the effects, believe me. Well let's go a second thing. I knew I'd get stuck. Verse 2, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted." So many people ask about fasting. Let me take a moment. They were fasting. What's fasting mean? It means they are praying. In the Bible, fasting is connected with prayer. Fasting is not a display where all of a sudden you say I'm going to stop eating and be spiritual. And then you announce to the world that you've stopped eating so they will all know you're spiritual. No, every once in a while we all need to stop eating, but it has little to do with spirituality. It's just one of those things in our society. It's a problem. But fasting is always connected with prayer in scripture.

Jesus talked about the fact that certain evil spirits didn't come out but by, and he linked the two together, prayer and fasting. In fact fasting is tied to vigilant passionate prayer. It is when an individual gets so lost in the needs of others, so lost in the service of Christ, that he all of a sudden has no thought for physical food. It is not that a guy necessarily says, "Well I think I'll fast." Now that may be all right sometimes. You may desire to spend the time concentrating your total energy on the things of Christ and you just want to set food aside. Talked to a fellow the other day who said he was going to do that, several weeks, going away with the Word of God and prayer to just go through some spiritual battles in his own life and he wanted not to eat during those days. And we prayed and talked about whether this was right to do, and we said it was, we felt that it was. But he wanted to spend time with God and he didn't want to be preoccupied with anything physical. He wanted to lose himself in the pursuit of scripture and the pursuit of holiness in time with Christ. And this is great, but there are times too when fasting is not a premeditated thing at all. It is that I become so concerned about needs and so concerned about spiritual issues that hunger dissipates. In other words, my concern takes away the thought of hunger. Let me add this, if you know very little about fasting, maybe you know very little about concern.

In the Bible there were times of fasting set on a feast kind of basis. You know, they ate and they didn't eat, and so forth and so on, as described by the law. But in the New Testament, in the new covenant, there is no such prescription. Let me add another thought. In terms of fasting there is in the Bible just the word fasting with little definition. But to give it some definition let me say this, that most fasts were not total fasts but partial fasts. Without going into a lot of detail suffice it to say this, that a partial fast was really the absenting of oneself from banquetings. In those days there wasn't any TV, there wasn't any bowling alley or movie theatre or anything like that, and entertainment was eating. And I mean boy the Romans really got wild. I mean they had pickled hummingbird tongue and all kinds of crazy things that they used to have at their banquets and I mean it was a big thing. You went to a banquet and you stuffed yourself and that was – let's face it food's fun, right? Sure. I mean all the fancy tastes and all the little deals and it's fun.

In our society you can just any route with it and part of the problem is it all tastes so good. If you just go away somewhere in the world where food is terrible you don't have that kind of a problem necessarily, until you get adjusted to it like the people there and then maybe it's a problem for them. But the point is a partial fast was the absenting of oneself from indulgence. And many times a person could be said to be fasting when in fact he maintained eating, which was not for the sake of entertaining himself but only for the sake of maintaining sustenance. I think that's the thing that we can be mindful about. That when food becomes a compulsion and when the tastes of things become a compulsion then that is not fasting. When you restrict yourself from things for their taste's sake and for their entertainment value and for the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh, strictly taking in those things needful for your existence, I think in a very real sense that can be spiritually fasting. Absenting yourself from the indulgence of food, which is purely entertaining or for the fulfilling of the lust rather than the needs of your body.

And so fasting is either total or partial. It may be a time of lostness in the concern and the prayer of others. I think the reason that people don't fast as often today is because people, in the society like ours with all that we have, just get kind of indifferent. We have it so good, we just really don't spend the time in the care of others so that eating is just a detail. Do you ever find days like that? I do in my life when eating is just a pain in the

neck to have to stop to eat, days when you're involved in spiritual pursuits.

You say, well are we commanded to fast? No, we're not commanded to fast in the Bible. Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to fast. Let me say this, Jesus expected us to fast. You say, what do you mean by that? And I'll just wrap it up with this little thought. Jesus said in Luke 5, and this is a beautiful thought, verse 33, the critics came to Him and they said, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" It was fasting time and John's disciples were fasting and the Pharisees, and Jesus' guys were really eating and having a great time. "He said unto them, 'Can you make the sons of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?'" He says, you don't fast at the wedding and the bridegroom is here, nothing to fast about. And I love this, "But the days will come," verse 35, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them and then shall they fast in those days." Did you get that? Jesus said there's coming a time when I leave and they'll fast. Why? Because they'll have spiritual battles to fight, spiritual struggles, and I won't be there visibly present, and they'll be on their knees and they'll be in agony over these things. No, Jesus never commanded Christians to fast, but He assumed that they would be lost in spiritual struggle and that they would fast, sometimes totally. And I can imagine that. I can imagine in my mind if one of my children was at the edge of death that I could be lost in the prayer. Or I can imagine if somebody in this congregation was in a spiritual crisis that I could get so lost in that spiritual issue that I totally abstained from food. I can imagine other times where I only limited myself in spiritual stress.

But in all of these things Jesus did give one standard, and I just close by reading this. It's important. "Moreover when you fast, be not like the hypocrites" – Matthew 6 – "of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast." Isn't that terrible? "Oh, I'm fasting." And they mess their hair up a lot and wrinkle their face and look emaciated and oh their stomach growls. He says, "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." You know what their reward is? People say, "Oh, there they are fasting." That's it. Verse 17, "But you when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face." Get your hair combed, wash your face and "don't appear unto anybody to fast but unto God who sees in secret and rewards openly." The only person that needs to know you're fasting is God. You don't need to come and announce to the world, "I'm fasting." You and God know you're fasting. That's the only people that need to know. You just comb your hair, wash your face and look sharp. Be with it. Spruce up. That's a spiritual issue between you and the Lord.

Hey, these are great leaders, aren't they? These are leaders not only lost in teaching the Word, but lost in prayer and fasting, so concerned are they over the spiritual need of the people they lead. Do you know that a church that has that kind of leadership is going to be a church to make a dent in the world. Isn't it? I pray God we may experience that even in our lives. Let's pray.

Father we are thankful that You've given us a pattern, Lord. It seems so far for me to live up to these standards. God help me and help those who labor with me in the ministry here. Help this beloved people as well, Father, that we might be the kind of church You want us to be, lost in the study of the Word, lost in the care of others, so that praying absorbs our time and energies, so that the things of life fade away. God we thank You for these principles. May they be a reality. Help us to so live our lives, every one of us, as priests offering to You sacrifices with which You are well pleased. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. ([Satanic Opposition to a Spirit Filled Church Part 1](#))

GREEK WORD STUDY ON "FILLED"

Filled (4092) (**pimplemi** from the obsolete **pláō** = to fill) to fill, to make full, to complete.

Of literal filling - of a wedding hall = Mt 22:10, of a sponge = Mt 27:48, Jn 19:29, Lk 5:7+ = of boats. Of skins or jars filled with water in Septuagint (Lxx) of Ge 21:19, Ge 24:16).

Most of the uses of this verb are by Luke (22/24) and most are used with in a figurative sense. Most describe persons filled with something (Spirit or an emotion) and are wholly affected, controlled or influenced by what fills them.

Time was filled up or completed - Lk 1:23+ and Lk 1:57+

Filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:15+ = of John the Baptist while still in mother's womb, Lk 2:4+ = day of

Pentecost, Acts 4:8+ = of Peter, Acts 4:31+ = the praying believers, Acts 9:17+ = of Paul, Acts 13:9+ = of Paul).

Filled with an emotion (Lk 4:28+, Lk 6:11+ = filled with rage, Lk 5:26+ = filled with fear, Acts 3:10+ = wonder and amazement, Acts 5:17+ = jealousy, Acts 13:45+ = Jews filled with jealousy, compare Acts 19:29+ = city filled with confusion). Of time fulfilled or completed (Lk 1:23+ = days of priestly service ended, Lk 1:57+, Lk 2:6+ = pregnancy completed, Lk 2:21-22+, Lk 21:22+). The important takeaway on this verb is to see that what fills a person controls the behavior and actions of that person. Obviously Spirit filling leads to good, godly behavior, but the other emotions noted above lead to sinful, ungodly behavior.

One of my favorite uses of this verb (other than being filled with the Spirit) is found in the prophecy in Habakkuk 2:14+ "For the earth **will be filled** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea." And another verse that speaks of the glorious hope we have at **Messiah's Second Coming** and establishment of His **Millennium (Messianic) Kingdom**. "I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house (Millennial Temple - read Ezek 43:2-4, 5) with glory,' says the LORD of hosts." (Haggai 2:7) And all God's children shout "Hallelujah-Praise the Lord!"

BDAG summarized - (1) to cause to be completely full (a) of external, perceptible things (Mt 27:48; Mk 15:36 Jn 19:29) or (b) of a person's inner life (filled with enthusiasm, etc). (2) Figuratively (as) of prophecies (passive voice) be fulfilled (Lk 1:20, 21:22). Of a period of time that comes to an end (Lk 1:23 = days of priestly service ended, Lk 1:57, 2:6, 2:21-22) ([A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

Friberg, et al - (1) literally; (a) spatially fill with (Lk 5.7); (b) passive, of intellectual and spiritual processes be filled with, experience completely (Lk 1.15); (2) figuratively and passive; (a) of prophecies be fulfilled, happen (Lk 21.22); (b) of time periods come to an end, be fulfilled (Lk 1.23) ([Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament- Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Mille Timothy Friberg](#))

Synonyms include - pleroo = to fulfill, complete; anapleroo = to fill up adequately

In classical Greek the verb has a basic meaning of "fill." Depending on the context it can refer to such things as a "full moon," a "swollen (full) stream," or a "full assembly." Other shades of meaning are "satisfy (in a good sense), glut, fill or discharge an office, to have enough of something," and, for females, "become pregnant."

Pimplemi - Usage: come(1), completed(2), ended(1), filled(18), fulfilled(1), passed(1).

Matthew 22:10 "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was **filled** with dinner guests.

Matthew 27:48 Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he **filled** it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

Luke 1:15+ "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be **filled** with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

Luke 1:23+ When the days of his priestly service were **ended**, he went back home.

Luke 1:41+ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was **filled** with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:57+ Now the time **had come** for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.

Luke 1:67+ And his father Zacharias was **filled** with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

Luke 2:6+ While they were there, the days were **completed** for her to give birth.

Luke 2:21+ And when eight days had **passed**, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:22+ And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were **completed**, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord

Luke 4:28+ And all the people in the synagogue were **filled** with rage as they heard these things;

Luke 5:7+ so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and **filled** both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

Luke 5:26+ They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were **filled** with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Luke 6:11+ But they themselves were **filled** with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

Luke 21:22+ because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be **fulfilled**.

Acts 2:4+ And they were all **filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Acts 3:10+ and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were **filled** with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Acts 4:8+ Then Peter, **filled** with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

Acts 4:31+ 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 5:17+ But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were **filled** with jealousy.

Acts 9:17+ So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be **filled** with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 13:9+ But Saul, who was also known as Paul, **filled** with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

Acts 13:45+ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were **filled** with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

Acts 19:29+ The city was **filled** with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Pimplemi - 112v in **Septuagint (Lxx)** - -

Ge 6:11, 13; 21:19; 24:16; 26:15; 44:1; Ex 2:16; 8:21; 10:6; 16:12, 32; 40:34-35; Lev 9:17; 16:12; 19:29; Josh 9:13; 1Sa 16:1; 1Kgs 8:10f; 18:35; 20:27; 2Kgs 3:17, 20; 4:6; 9:24; 10:21; 21:16; 23:14; 24:4; 2Chr 7:1f; 16:14; 36:5; Ezra 9:11; Esther 4:17; Job 3:15; 31:31; Ps 17:14; 26:10; 38:7; 65:4, 10; 80:9; 88:3; 104:28; 123:3f; 126:2; Prov 1:13, 31; 3:10; 5:10; 12:14, 21; 14:14; 15:4; 18:20; 25:16f; 28:19; 30:9, 22; Eccl 5:10; Song 5:2; Isa 6:4; 15:9; 22:7; 40:2; Jer 6:11; 19:4; 44:17; 46:12; 48:5; 49:28; 50:19; 51:5, 34; Ezek 3:3; 8:17; 9:7, 9; 10:2-4; 23:33; 28:16; 30:11; 32:4; 43:26; Dan 3:19; 12:4; Joel 2:24; Mic 6:12; Nah 2:12; Hab 2:14; Hag 2:7; Zech 8:5; 9:13, 15

Below are a few representative uses of **pimplemi** in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** translation of the Old Testament...

Ge 6:11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was **filled** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) with violence.

Ge 6:13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is **filled** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Genesis 26:15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by **filling** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) them with earth.

Genesis 44:1 Then he commanded his house steward, saying, '**Fill** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

Psalms 65:4 How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You To dwell in Your courts. **We will be satisfied** (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.

Psalms 88:3 For my soul has **had enough** (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) troubles, And my life has drawn near to Sheol.

Psalms 123:4 Our soul is greatly **filled** (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) With the scoffing of those who are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud.

Proverbs 1:31 "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) with their own devices.

Proverbs 3:10 So your barns **will be filled** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.

Proverbs 5:10 And strangers **will be filled** (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) with your strength And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;

Proverbs 12:14 A man will be **satisfied** (Hebrew = **saba** = to be sated or filled; Lxx = pimplemi) with good by the fruit of his words, And the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.

Proverbs 12:21 No harm befalls the righteous, But the wicked are **filled** (Hebrew = **male**= to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) with trouble.

Daniel 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was **filled** with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

Micah 6:12 "For the rich men of the city are **full** (Hebrew = **male** = to be full; Lxx = pimplemi) of violence, Her residents speak lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

Add (added, proceeded) ([4369](#))(**prostithemi** from **pros** = to, toward, besides + **tithemi** = to place) literally means to "put to" or "to place beside" and is used literally of adding something to an existing quantity.

The most exciting uses of **prostithemi** in the NT are in Luke's description of the supernatural addition of souls to the Kingdom of God (of persons added to a group already existing and to whom they henceforth belong) (Acts 2:41, Acts 2:47, Acts 5:14, Acts 11:24).

Paul uses **prostithemi** to describe the the Law added "because of transgressions." (Gal 3:19) (See discussion below).

In a unique use in Acts 13:36 **prostithemi** describes the burial of David who was "added to" his fathers who had fallen asleep before him = to lay with or by the side of (Compare similar uses Ge 25:8, 25:17, 35:29, 49:33 of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob = "he was gathered to [Lxx = added to] his people."). **Robertson** says "This figure for death probably arose from the custom of burying families together (He references the use of **prostithemi** in Lxx of Jdg 2:10)." Bloomfield adds that this use is "an expression derived from the O. T. (Gen. 49:29; 25:8; Judg. 2:10,) used with allusion to those vast subterranean vaults, in which the Hebrews, and other Oriental nations, used to deposit the dead of a whole family or race." (A Greek and English Lexicon of the NT)

The writer of Hebrews uses **prostithemi** to describe the Israelites at Mt Sinai who heard the sounds of God at Mt Sinai and begged for no more words "be added" (~be spoken) (Heb 12:19).

Many of the NT uses of **prostithemi** are figurative and speak of something which added or increased such as an hour to our life (Mt 6:27, Lk 12:25), all the things we need for life and godliness (Mt 6:33, Lk 12:31), Herod's crimes or sins against God (Lk 3:20), or faith (a prayer for more) (Lk 17:5).

Several uses of **prostithemi** in context mean to **proceed** (Lk 20:11, 12, Acts 12:3, cp Lk 19:11). Mounce says "from the Hebrew, denote continuation, or repetition."

In Lxx of Lev 5:16-note describing the restitution in the Trespass (Guilt) Offering (Lev 5:14-6:7) - "he... **shall add** (Heb = yasaph - to add; Lxx = prostithemi) to it a fifth part of it and give it to the priest."

Friberg - (1) put to, add to; (a) as adding to what is already present (Mt 6.27); (b) as uniting people into a society already existing (Acts 2.41); (c) passive, as a Hebraism of one joining his forefathers through death be buried with, be laid away with, be gathered to (Acts 13.36); (2) provide, give, grant (Mt 6.33; Lk 17.5); (3) as a Hebraism denoting continuation or repetition when followed by an infinitive, literally add to do something, i.e. do again, do further (Lk 19.11); (4) as a Hebraism followed by an infinitive to mark an event that immediately follows proceed to do (Acts 12.3) ([Ibid](#))

TDNT - **1.** In secular Greek this means "to put to," "to add to," "to shut," middle "to attach oneself to," "to win," "to join" (cf. also "to win over"). **2.** In the LXX we find Hebraizing in many of the references (cf. Gen. 4:2; 25:1). Elsewhere the usage is similar to that of secular Greek. **3.** a. There are some Hebraisms in the NT (cf. Lk. 19:11). "adding to" is the meaning in Mk. 4:24; Heb. 12:19; Lk. 3:20; Mk. 6:27; Mt. 6:33 (unless "give" is the sense here). **b.** The idea of "adding" suggests that the law is simply an interlude in Gal. 3:19. **c.** The adding of

people (to the church) is the point in Acts 2:41, 47; they are added to the Lord in 5:14 and 11:24.

Prostithemi - 18x in 18v - **NAS** Usage: add(2), added(6), adding(1), brought(1), further... be spoken(1), increase(1), laid(1), more will be given... besides(1), proceeded(3), went(1).

Matthew 6:27 "And who of you by being worried can **add** a single hour to his life?

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things **will be added** to you.

Zodhiates comments - We do not know what worldly goods are best for us or when we should have them. Jesus said that if we pursue the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, everything else will be added to us in God's time. The **passive voice** of **prostithemi** means that **God will do the adding** according to His omniscient wisdom. **We do not have to be concerned, for He promises to give what we need when we need it.** Mature Christians desire only their needs and wait for God's timely, all-sufficient (autarkeia [841](#)) provision to bring them perfect peace and contentment (2Cor. 9:8; 1Ti. 6:6). This is the meaning of blessedness (makarios-[3107](#); Mt 5:6) -- full satisfaction with God's provision. (Exegetical Commentary on Matthew)

Mark 4:24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and **more will be given** you **besides**."

Luke 3:20 Herod also **added** this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

Robertson - (Prostithemi is used in the) NT chiefly in Luke and Acts. Hippocrates used it of applying wet sponges to the head and Galen of applying a decoction of acorns. There is no evidence that Luke has a medical turn to the word here

Luke 12:25 "And which of you by worrying can **add** a single hour to his life's span?"

Luke 12:31 "But seek His kingdom, and these things **will be added** to you."

Luke 17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "**Increase** our faith!"

Luke 19:11 While they were listening to these things, Jesus **went on** ("added" or "proceeded") to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

Comment - This is a Hebraism denoting continuation or repetition when followed by an infinitive, literally add to do something, i.e. do again, do further.

Luke 20:11 "And he **proceeded** to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed."

Luke 20:12 "And he **proceeded** to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out."

Acts 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were **added** (**aojist tense** = past completed action; **passive voice** = God produces the supernatural fruit = "divine addition!"; **indicative mood** = mood of certainty = there is no doubt 3000 souls were miraculously added in one day!) about three thousand souls (Don't you love it! Luke was not inspired to say "people" but souls! Our Father is passionate for the souls of people to be with Him forever! Compare 2Pe 3:9-note; 1Ti 2:4).

Comment - **Was adding** is in the **passive voice** with God's Spirit as the implied acting **Agent** and so it is only fitting that this genre of usage is often referred to as "**divine passive**."

Cliff McManus - The word for "**added**" (prostithemi) here is a very specific compound Greek word meaning "placed into" and speaks of a deliberate, calculated act of adding a select number to a greater, existing whole. In other words, the early church was keeping a careful count of those who were being added as new members to the body. (Christian Living Beyond Belief: Biblical Principles of Life and Faith).

Acts 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord **was adding** (literally = "were being continually added" = **imperfect tense** = over and over, again and again, portrays an action in process; **active voice** = subject [Lord] accomplishes this action; **indicative mood** = mood of certainty = there is no doubt this action occurred!) to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Comment - **Added** is a term used in early Jewish proselyte literature to indicate being gathered to or joining a fellowship, implying a break with a former community -- e.g., Gentiles being joined to Israel as used in the Lxx of Esther 9:27 "for all those who **allied** (Hebrew = lavah = to join or be joined; Lxx = prostithemi) themselves

with them."

We see a similar sense in the Lxx of Isaiah 14:1 "When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land (**Note**: this refers to the time of Messiah's return and subsequent reign in the **Millennium**), then strangers **will join** (Hebrew = lavah = to join or be joined; Lxx = prostithemi) them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob."

Acts 5:14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were **constantly added** (**imperfect tense** = over and over, again and again, portrays an action in process = they kept on being added = what a dramatic picture of God's saving one after another! Wouldn't you liked to have been there to witness this power of God!; **active voice** = subject [Lord] accomplishes this action; **indicative mood** = mood of certainty = there is no doubt this action occurred!) to their number,

Acts 11:24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers **were brought** (KJV, ESV = "added") (literally = "were being continually added" = **aorist tense** = past completed action; **passive voice** = God produced the supernatural soul fruit = miraculous "divine addition!"; **indicative mood** = mood of certainty = there is no doubt this action occurred!) to the Lord.

Acts 12:3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he **proceeded** (Young's Literal = "he added") to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

Comment - This sense of **prostithemi** is a Hebraism followed by an infinitive to mark an event that immediately follows = proceed to do.

Beale comments - The stark Hebraism (prostithemi + infinitive) seen in the phrase "proceeded to arrest" is common in the LXX (e.g., Gen. 4:2); elsewhere in the NT it is found only in Luke 19:11; 20:11–12. This is a clear example of adopting the style of the LXX. (Commentary on the NT use of the OT)

Acts 13:36 "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and **was laid** (Young's Literal = "was added unto") among his fathers and underwent decay;

Galatians 3:19 Why the Law then? **It was added** because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Mounce comments - by this (by the law being "added because of transgressions") Paul is stressing that through the law of Moses we come to a knowledge of our sin (cf. Ro 3:20), which in turn drives us to search for a Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Thus, the law leads us to Christ.

M R De Haan has an interesting comment - Next, please notice that there did exist something else, however, before the law came, and to which Paul says the law was added. Now when we add something, we of course imply and pre-suppose that there was something to which to add. To what then was the law added? Under what did men live before God gave the law by Moses? We all know the answer—it was the Grace of God. Adam was under grace, Noah was under grace, Abraham was under grace. God dealt in grace before the law, and during the law, and since the law. He still deals in grace. In Galatians 3, verse 8, we learn that the Gospel, "the good news," was preached already to Abraham. Now the Gospel is the good news to the sinner, that by grace through faith he may be saved, apart from the works of the law. But the law is not good news to the sinner. On the contrary, the law is very very bad news for the transgressor and the sinner, for the law tells this sinner and shows him how wicked he is; and he is accursed and condemned by this law, and therefore must be executed by the law, for his sins. Now this bad news of the law was added to the good news of grace. Notice, Paul says definitely, "it was added." It did not take the place of grace, it was not mixed with grace, it did not supplant the grace of God. It was added. Now the word "added" is "prostithemi" in the original Greek, and means "to place along side of." We may therefore say that the law came in and was placed along side of grace. It is important to notice this distinction. Grace was not removed when the law came in; it remained there for all who would see how utterly unworthy they were in the eyes of the law, and fleeing from the curse of the law would throw themselves upon the mercy and the grace of God alone. The Israelite under the law was saved by grace just as Abraham before the law, and just as we must be saved after the law. (Galatians Commentary)

Hebrews 12:19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no **further** (that no word be added) word be spoken to them.

Prostithemi - 238v in the **Septuagint (Lxx)**-

Ge 4:2, 12; 8:12, 21; 18:29; 25:1, 8, 17; 30:24; 35:29; 37:8; 38:5, 26; 44:23; 49:29, 33; Ex 1:10; 5:7; 8:29;

9:28, 34; 10:28; 11:6; 14:13; 23:2; 30:15; Lev 5:16; 6:5; 19:14; 22:14; 26:18, 21; 27:13, 15, 19, 27, 31; Nu 5:7; 11:25; 16:39; 18:2, 4; 20:24, 26; 22:15, 19, 25f; 27:13; 31:2; 32:14f; 36:3f; Dt 1:11; 3:26; 4:2; 5:22, 25; 12:32; 13:4, 11; 17:16; 18:16; 19:9, 20; 20:8; 23:15; 25:3; 28:68; 32:50; Josh 7:12; 14:8f; 23:12f; Jdg 2:10, 21; 3:12; 4:1; 8:28; 9:37; 10:6, 13; 11:14; 13:1, 21; 18:25; 20:22f, 28; Ru 1:17 1Sa 3:6, 8, 17, 21; 7:13; 9:8; 12:19, 25; 14:44; 15:6, 35; 18:29; 19:8, 21; 20:13, 17; 23:4; 25:22; 26:10; 27:1, 4; 2Sa 2:22, 28; 3:9, 35; 5:22; 7:10, 20; 12:8; 14:10; 18:22; 19:13; 24:1, 3, 25; 1Kgs 2:23; 10:7; 12:11, 14; 16:33; 19:2; 20:10; 2 Kgs 1:11, 13; 6:23, 31; 19:30; 20:6; 21:8; 22:20; 24:7; 1 Chr 14:13; 17:9, 18; 21:3; 22:14 2 Chr 9:6; 10:11, 14; 15:9; 28:13, 22; 33:8; 34:28 Ezra 10:10; Neh 13:18 Esther 8:3; 9:27; Job 13:9; 20:9; 27:1, 19; 29:1, 22; 32:13; 34:32, 37; 36:1; 40:5; Ps 10:18; 41:8; 61:6; 62:10; 69:26f; 71:14; 77:7; 78:17; 89:22; 115:14; 120:3; Pr 3:2; 9:9, 11, 18; 10:22, 27; 19:4, 19; 30:6; Eccl 1:16, 18; 2:9, 26; 3:14; Isa 1:5, 13; 7:10; 8:5; 10:20; 11:11; 14:1; 23:12; 26:15; 29:14; 30:1; 38:5; 47:1; 50:4; 51:22; 52:1 Jer 36:32; 45:3; Lam 4:15f, 22; Ezek 23:14; 36:12; 37:16; Da 4:36; 6:28; 10:18; 11:34; Hos 1:6; 9:15; 13:2; Joel 2:2; Amos 3:15; 5:2; 7:8, 13; 8:2; Jonah 2:4; Nah 1:15; Zeph 3:11; Zech 14:17

Representative uses of **prostithemi** in the **Septuagint**...

Deut 1:11 'May the LORD, the God of your fathers, **increase** (Hebrew = yasaph - to add; Lxx = prostithemi) you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you!

Deut 4:2 "You shall not **add** (Hebrew = yasaph - to add; Lxx = prostithemi) to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Leviticus 26:21 'If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, **I will increase** (Hebrew = yasaph - to add; Lxx = prostithemi) the plague on you seven times according to your sins.

Prostithemi in the **Septuagint** - **Active** voice - to put or place = Lv 19:14; to add, to increase = 2 Chr 28,13; Dt 4,2; **Middle** Voice to add to, to increase Ezek 23,14; to continue, to repeat Nm 11,25; to attach oneself to sb Dt 23,16 **Passive** Voice to be added to, to be joined to (by dying) Gen 25,8; to be joined with, to associate with Nm 18,4

Norman Brown in his article on [The Filling Of The Holy Spirit In The Book Of Acts](#) wrote that "The **book of Acts** teaches that being filled with the Spirit was a normal experience in the early church. Those individuals who are mentioned as being filled include: **(1)** the Apostles and leaders of the church, such as Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and Stephen (Acts 4:8, 11:24, 9:17, 7:55); and **(2)** the Assembly of the disciples. Those who were "all with one accord in one place" on the day of Pentecost were simple disciples, whose names are not even all recorded (Acts 2:1, cf. Acts 1:15); yet **all** 120 of them were filled (Acts 2:4). The assembly numbered 5,000 as it gathered to welcome back Peter and John after their first arrest; and, again, **all** were filled (Acts 4:4, 31). Individuals who were filled included also **(3)** the newly converted. Acts 9:17 reveals that Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Spirit three days after meeting Christ. Another example of new converts experiencing this work of the Spirit occurs in Acts 13:52. In this verse, the disciples at Antioch in Pisidia—to whom Paul had preached for only a few weeks at most—were "filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." In all of these instances, the Holy Spirit is ministering to individuals without deference to their spiritual maturity or position within the church. The Spirit filled not only the church leaders, but also the "ordinary" Christians in "ordinary" Christian service. According to W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The true interpretation would seem to be that all the disciples, and not the Apostles only, were filled with the Holy Spirit. The narrative does not warrant the view that the Apostles alone were the recipients of the gift." Thus, any Christian, however immature, could be a recipient of this work of the Spirit upon meeting its conditions. In addition to teaching the normalcy of Spirit-filling, the book of Acts also avers that this filling is instantaneous. On Pentecost, for example, in the very moment the Spirit descended upon them, the disciples were filled. The 5,000 were filled in a similar fashion (Acts 4:31). Each case in Acts bears witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit is able to fill individuals, as they are, to the measure of their capacity, instantaneously. The most distinguishing feature of this filling, however, is that it is a repeated experience. Again, one need only compare Acts 2 with Acts 4 to verify that the same group which was filled on the Day of Pentecost was involved in a second filling only days later; the majority (if not all) of the 120 were among the 5,000 who, after the prayer meeting held subsequent to the Sanhedrin's questioning, "were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 4:31). Thus, these Christians were not necessarily filled once and for all: fulness could last or be repeated.

The Conditions For Spirit-Filling In Acts - The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as gradually unfolded in the book of Acts, contains certain aspects of His ministry being subject to the immediate agency of the apostles. But not so with the work of the Spirit in filling. As Walvoord states it, "In the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit...every instance fully sustains the premise that this ministry is found only in Christians yielded to God." On Pentecost, for example, the disciples were not filled with the Spirit because of their long or earnest prayers, but because "**the day of Pentecost had fully come**"; that is, the time had arrived for the fulfillment of a promise. Christ had instructed them to tarry at Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Spirit, not to pray for the Spirit to come (Acts 1:4). Restated, the disciples were not waiting for their own filling, but for the advent of the Spirit into the world. That waiting or "praying

through" is not requisite to Spirit-filling is emphasized by Ryrie: "*One searches in vain to find some example in the New Testament where believers are told to tarry or where they do tarry for the filling of the Spirit. Indeed, one searches without success to find an instance when believers ever prayed for the filling of the Spirit since the day of Pentecost.*" (Ed: **I would slightly disagree - see Paul's prayers for the saints Col 1:9, Eph 1:18-19**) Thus, the Spirit's filling does not depend upon the influence of prayer, God is not withholding this blessing until He is prevailed upon or until some reluctance on His part is broken down. Rather, He awaits the necessary human adjustments. In other words, He is waiting for the believer to yield all to Him. Neither does the filling of the Spirit depend upon securing more of the presence of God. In all of the instances in Acts, the Holy Spirit is ministering to the individuals in entire freedom from hindrance; they have not received more of the Spirit, but the Spirit possesses them completely, exercising His sway and dominion in every realm of life. In the original act of indwelling the believer at salvation, each individual received the whole of the person of the Spirit. Therefore, as Walvoord concludes, "*It is not a question of securing more of the presence of God but of entering into the reality of His presence and yielding to all the control and ministry for which He has come to indwell.*" Finally, the book of Acts reveals that the filling of the Spirit is not conditioned by the spiritual maturity of an individual. As was noted earlier, any Christian, however immature, can attain immediately to this spiritual blessing upon meeting its conditions. The 120, for example, were certainly not all equally spiritual or devoted or faithful, but all were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). The fact that no two people are identical, however, does affect the outward manifestations of Spirit-filling. Scriptures point to this ministry as accounting for, in large measure, the wide diversity of spiritual experience. This variety in the results of filling is clearly illustrated in the pages of Acts. ([The Filling Of The Holy Spirit In The Book Of Acts - Central Bible Quarterly 16:4 - Winter, 1973 - Page 23-30](#))