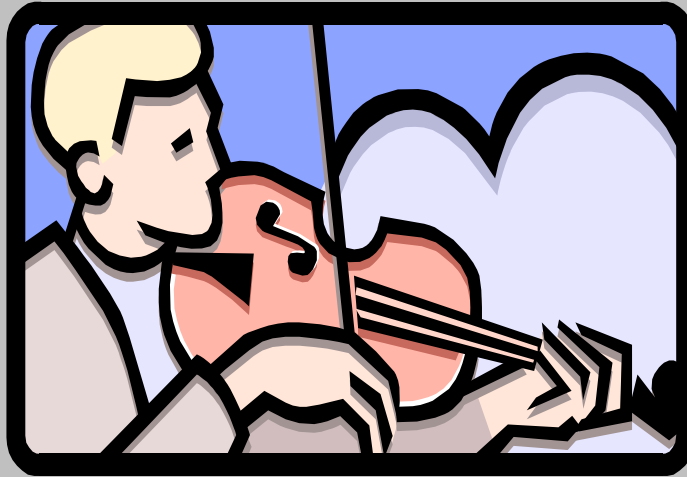


The Spirit filled Christian

What doth the scriptures say about this matter?



Billy C Sichone

Foreword by Conrad Mbewe

2nd Edition 2005

All quotations from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise stated

For any queries, please get in touch on the address below:

Emmanuel Baptist Church, P.O Box T102, Mpika
Zambia

© Billy C Sichone

All rights unreserved,

All saints are free to use this work, store, share or photocopy as long as it is used for edification purposes. Feed back is appreciated and in case you would like to get in touch, please write to Billy.Sichone@gmail.com or call

260977429521/260955429521/260966559762

Dedication

This is a labour of love and is thus dedicated to all the redeemed of the Lord that care for the well being of their souls

“Those who serve God must give him their hottest love, their highest joy, their strongest faith, their greatest fear, they must act every grace, extend every faculty, improve every part...there must be head work and hand work and heart work in the ordinances” Jeremiah Burroughs

Table of contents

FORE WORD 5
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION 6
PREFACE TO THE 2ND EDITION 2005..... 6
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPRIT FILLED CHRISTIANS 12
HOW THEN IS SPIRIT FILLING TO BE ATTAINED? 17
**WHAT ARE THE TRUE, SURE AND CERTAIN EVIDENCES OF A SPIRIT FILLED
CHRISTIAN? (PSALM 119: 164) 24**
GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 36
INDEX 38
ABOUT THE AUTHOR..... 41

Fore word

In this rendering of *The Spirit Filled Christian*, Billy Sichone handles a very deep truth with an ability of one juggling lanterns in order to show those in a dark alley the way to a bright end. The subject matter is more relevant than it has ever been in our present age.

Many preachers are leading many people up the wrong way into darkness and ignorance. It is equally true to say that many Christians are confused about the state of being "Spirit-filled" and, therefore, are not as effective as they should be in the service of the Lord. This is both in the private exercise of their Christian graces and in the public exercise of their gifts in and through the local Church.

Here is a booklet that deals with this vital aspect of the Christian life from a biblical perspective. Though its size entails a brief consideration, it is nevertheless one that will provoke the sincere Christian to take serious stock of their present circumstance and make amends. Hopefully, many will be encouraged to find that they are not going down the wide road that leads to death.

I am glad that the Lord placed it on Billy's heart to write on this issue. I highly encourage the Christian reader to devour it.

Conrad Mbewe
Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka
September 2009

Preface to the first edition

As I put pen to paper, I feel very inadequate considering the height to which I have had to ascend. I felt like one Miss Santosh Yadav^f who has scaled Mount Everest twice at only age 25. However, I still want to scale Mount Pisga and glimpse at glory land though the route I have to use is overgrown with thorns, weeds, thistles, pot hole and where dangers abound at every turn. What dire straits I tread! But I trust that He who begun a good work in me (Philippians 1:6) has assisted this jar of clay in penning down these thoughts. May He help both reader and writer alike to grasp these things to our mutual spiritual good and edification, Amen!

Eph 3:8

Billy C Sichone.

Lusaka 12/08/1993.

Preface to the 2nd edition 2005

Many years have passed since I first wrote this book. Many parameters in the environment have radically changed to the extent that the challenges that confront us at this stage may drastically be different in certain senses. On the economic front, the change over from a command to a market economy has seen many either grasp the opportunities to success or sink into abject poverty. On the spiritual front, many preachers and churches have mushroomed, peddling all manner of agenda. Many of them have clearly departed from the trusted ancient paths and ended up into near 'Synagogues of Satan' where all manner of vices flourish. Others have remained rigidly unmoved to their own peril. In the quest to preserve the truths passed on from the earlier torch bearers in the spirit of Jude 2 and 3, they have failed to read and move with the times. As a result, myriads have ended up in wrong camps. Further, there has been continued talk about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This is a lively and healthy development but I fear far too many things are ascribed to Him some of which are mere human inventions. As can be seen, many issues have mutated over the years. But amidst all these dynamics, one thing however has remained constant: the heart of man. The human heart has remained essentially the same; desperately wicked needing urgent remedial spiritual repair by the Lord. This second edition therefore comes into your hands with a prayer that the Lord will be pleased to apply these truths to your heart in these degenerate and spiritually dry times.

It must be noted from the outset that this is not a 'quick fix' formula nor is it a solution to all the maladies you face but is meant to help you have a similar experience that the disciples had on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:32) two thousand years ago.

Now unto Him that called us be glory forever,

^f An Asian lady as reported by one of the daily papers in 1993.

Amen!

Yours in Him,

Billy C Sichone

14/09/2005

Mongu

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:15 - 20) (NIV)

Introduction and justification of study

Our lot falls in especially spiritually slippery and dry times. There is so much happening that comes under the "Christian" umbrella and yet when meticulously analysed against the touch stone of scripture, it soon becomes evident that all is a hoax or ploy carefully crafted and schemed by Satan to mislead the unsuspecting child of God. The situation is worsened by the prevailing pervasive "evangelical dark age" that has enveloped the Church in these degenerate days. Many priceless doctrines which once glittered brightly in centuries gone by are now buried and forgotten. Their potent lustre is covered over with many layers of erroneous dust particles. It therefore has become necessary to recover & redeem the strong old doctrines from the man-made pseudo graves one by one. The treatment of the "Spirit filled Christian" is one of them. Thus, as we get along to excavate this potent teaching from scripture, it soon becomes evident that the scriptures are rich, if only systematically, prayerfully and meticulously read, using the best available tools and techniques. He is the best miner who uses the cutting edge technologies to extract the mineral ore, all things being equal. Very well then, let us delve into the apostle's treatment of Ephesians chapter five!

Exposition and background

In the above text, the Apostle Paul, as was his custom, continues to apply the earlier stated doctrines in the first three chapters. Chapters 4 to 6 are basically practical applications of the foregone truths and facts. In the fifth chapter, Paul encourages the saints to be imitators of God (verse 1) having seen that Christ redeemed them by his own precious blood. Indeed the chapter is a deep mine where spiritual gems meet us at every turn in the shafts. Behold the walls themselves are made of pure spiritual rock! We even have a problem to mine because we hardly find any impurities at all! Time will fail us to begin to examine every specimen extracted but we shall confine ourselves to the 18th, 19th and 20th verses.

Having clearly demonstrated what the Ephesians once were, are and ought to be, the apostle hurries on to encourage the Christians to redeem the time (v16), the reason being that the days are progressively evil. He warns them against being sluggish or foolish but rather to eagerly desire to know the Lord's will for their lives here and now (v17). It must be stated from the onset that we address two basic questions:

- i. WHAT IS TO BE SPIRIT FILLED? (V18)
- ii. WHAT ARE THE TRUE, SURE AND CERTAIN EVIDENCES OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIAN? (V19, 20)

No doubt, our day is filled with much talk about the Holy Spirit. It is common place in Zambia today[€] to hear about the Spirit of God but many an utterer of these words is

[€] 1993 onwards

millions of kilometres away from the true knowledge of the Christ. They have a form of godliness but deny its power (2 Timothy 3: 5, Titus 1:16). Their lives and profession often do not match. They are a contradiction. One wonders which Spirit they talk about. On the other hand, we have those who feel agitated at the mention of the third person of the Holy Trinity (Godhead). They get tensed up and their hair stands on end as though one was blaspheming or had been electrocuted. But what is the truth about this matter of being 'filled with the Spirit'? In subsequent paragraphs, we examine the scriptures like a skilled surgeon on a septic wound.

It is evident that in the 1st century, the heathens were full of all manner of evil practices such as whore mongering, malice, slander, superstition, orgies and drunkenness. The Apostle picks on drunkenness (v18), which he says should be the opposite of the Spirit filled life. He says "Do not get drunk on wine ..." This informs us that drunkenness is foreign to the new Christian nature. The wicked delight in getting drunk and unashamedly make of all sorts of wild boasts. Zambians are known all over the world to be great guzzlers. Generally, wherever you find celebrations, beer inevitably must be freely flowing the absence of which dooms the function to failure. Many an infidel recites their "exploits" over the weekend with much glee and elation, whose evil eyes sparkle with the wine of sin as they narrate. If any one does not have such a catchy tale, then their weekend "must have been dull." The heathens indulge in extravagant drinking for many 'flimsy' reasons but two suggestions are forwarded as to why they plunge headlong;

1. "To forget problems"
2. "To be happy"

I deliberately put the above reasoning in quotation marks because this is not the truth.

1. "To forget problems". Our nation is highly problem ridden evidenced by every structure of our economy falling asunder[≈]. Dilapidated buildings and shackles abound everywhere. Many a home is 'hunger' stricken akin to the super malnourished pauper nations littered across the world. Every night fall that passes by, many breathe a sigh of relief but quickly plunge into planning for the next day, "what shall we eat, or wear?" Matthew 5:25 mirrors them well. These thoughts keep many awake through the watches of the night. Every lump of nshima (food) eaten is hard earned and every calorie derived there from used to labour for the next meal. As a result, when beer makes a sudden fleshly appearance, they jump at the opportunity and gulp it "taking it by the horns". By the time they are done with it, the beer also has out done them, for they can hardly walk! They stagger. This was the state of the heathen at the time of Paul's writing the Epistle. They aimed to be filled with wine all the time and as a result they spoke and acted not as their normal selves. This is true of many a heathen today! Unfortunately, this supposedly truth of forgetting all miseries is not true because this does not solve problems but simply postpones them to another time. It is simply chaining a strong Tiger with a weak rope for a season. The Christian is therefore warned against such a scenario. They are not to be filled with wine of worries either lest they are tempted to turn to something that seems to give temperor satisfaction for a time but miserably "crash land" back to their problems when the feelings and emotions take their flight. When reality dawns, the pangs of the hang over set in. The Christian must be warned against the "wine" of our day which has filled many a

[≈] As at 1993

mind. Many are deceived into thinking that they can attain instant and entire sanctification in this life! They are told that they will know instant and total victory over sin forever. Admittedly, they outwardly seem to attain for a few days but soon afterwards are seen to rush from one prayer meeting to another seeking to crank the same initial exhilarating feelings and emotions. When overwhelmed, submerged or clouded by sins and afflictions, many simply abandon the old ship of faith proving that they were never saved in the first place (Hebrews 6:4, 2 Peter 2:20, 1 John 2: 19). True saints often become miserable thinking that they are not spiritual or have burnt their zeal to ashes. It must be noted then, that the heathen do not actually forget their problems but rather perpetuate them. Beware O' Christians of that sly lie of instant sanctification. Just as actual wine is a depressant not a stimulant, so also these emotions.

2. In the second place, the heathen drink because they want "to be happy". This is characteristic of all the non - Christians. They have an inordinate desire for pleasure. They want to satisfy their passions leading to the slavery of pleasing their bodies. Their monstrous appetites must be quenched somehow or other. Are we not told in Romans 1:30 that they invent ways of doing evil? They are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (2Timothy 3:4) Isn't this true of nearly all unconverted? They drink beer to be happy and celebrate. "I want to enjoy like everybody else" they say with contempt as they pour scorn at those who oppose. The saints appear old fashioned, fossilized and out of touch with the times. I have read of one youth who drunk the illicit Kachasu brew to death. This he did for pleasure and to make a "name" among his peers. Having drunk half way through his bottle, he suddenly crumbled and collapsed never to rise again. At first the spectators cheered but later realized that their champion was no more. Many drink and determine to get drunk thinking that they are "high" while everybody else is boring. "It is a matter of perception" they claim while feeling that they are on the pinnacle of Mount Everest while everyone is at the bottom of Lake Tanganyika, deeply submerged in problems. This again is the Apostle's warning against being filled with wine. For they that are filled with wine are not wholly their conscious sober selves. Similarly, our lot falls in times when the troubled saint is invited by many a "cow boy preacher" to be entirely sanctified and be happy, "come" they emotionally say, "and be filled then you'll be rich." Isn't this a common saying among us?

So much then for the warning given in the 18th verse, I trust we now have known what alcohol does and that it leads to debauchery or excess.

In the second part of that verse, the apostle positively states what ought characterize and fill the Christian. This is in contradiction to the preceding warning.

The Christian instead must be filled with the Spirit of God. It must be clear here that what is spoken of is not the "baptism with/by/of the Spirit" For the two are different. We are never commanded anywhere in scripture to seek a baptism with the Holy Spirit - for it is a gift freely given (Acts 1: 4, 2, 38; I Corinthians 12:13), but rather, we are told to seek to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b). Simply stated, **all true Christians are baptized with the Holy Spirit** while not all Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism occurs at conversion (Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5). This is solely a divine work of the Holy Spirit in the subconscious of a soul. In this process of regeneration or bringing to spiritual life, God alone is the author. Man is passive in this work.

Further, it must be noted that there are different baptisms spoken of in the Bible (Hebrews 6:1-3). A distinction between these is beyond the scope of this book but suffice it to say that baptism with the Holy Spirit is once and for all at conversion while in filling is a continuous work of the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies and conforms us more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note also that infilling is Not a second work of grace as some would have us believe but it is a sanctification process.

On the other hand, being Spirit filled is the sovereign work of God primarily also, though in this case man is responsible and fully conscious by seeking from the father. There is some cooperation. Our immediate text is the best example of this. Other texts are Acts 15: 8; Acts 4:8; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:3, Matthew 10

In the Ephesians passage, it is to the being filled with the Spirit, I believe, the Apostle alludes to.

But what is to be filled with the Spirit?

- i. I suggest that to be filled with the Spirit is to be endued with an unusual degree of the presence of the Holy Spirit (although being Spirit filled can be argued as the normal and ideal state of the healthy believer). This is seen in Psalm 23:5 where David says that his cup over flows and his head is anointed with oil. The oil may signify or refer to the Spirit of God and thus his soul over flows. Note that this table is prepared in the presence of his enemies but he is able to overflow with joy. The Spirit filled Christian has a greater measure of the Spirit in him or her and is always joyous or rejoicing despite his/ her circumstances (Philippians 4:4). The times might be hard and pressing in from all sides but the Christian's spiritual wings enable him/ her to soar high above (Isaiah 40: 31) circumstances, afflictions and trials like the eagle. S/he is physically afflicted but inwardly rejoicing and cheerful (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Joy does not depend on outward circumstances.
- ii. In the second place, to be Spirit filled is to be so full of the presence of God such that the people outside or within the church observe a marked difference and progress (1 Timothy 4:15). The Spirit filled person shines in the face like Moses (Exodus 34:29-) and Stephen (Acts 7:55) because they reflect Christ. These Spirit filled Christians are influenced at every turn in thought and behaviour by the Spirit of God. S/he does not do anything mechanically or without assurance from above. The most holy men are always the most humble men. David called himself flea (1 Samuel 26:20). Paul considered himself the least among the saints as well as a wretched man. (Ephesians 3:8, Romans 7:24)
- iii. Thirdly, the spirit filled Christian exhibits clear marks of grace unlike what they once were before conversion. Every day, their hearts and minds are being sanctified and conformed to the image of God's son. They pant for God akin to a deer (Psalm 42:1; 119:81; 62:1,2). This is noticeable in their spiritual appetites, what delights their hearts, living in a manner worthy of the lord, abhorring sin and a growing love for God in holiness. Such saints are never satisfied with a token presence of God but long for much more each passing year.

Characteristics of the Sprit filled Christians

Many traits are found in believers in varying degrees but the following are definitely among them:

(1) They are humble.

These people are not egocentric but consider others better than themselves - not flattering or malicious (Philippians 2:3). This is one hallmark of such a saint. They never make any boasts about themselves or look down on those who are less privileged in society or in the church (I John 2:15-17). They will gladly eat with you the meal of kapenta or "delele" (okra). They will happily share the rough and concrete bed with you if need be, they will accept all your outward providence and yet thank God for you. This characteristic mark makes them realize their vileness and before God. (Isaiah 64:4; Jeremiah 17:5; Psalm 51:5; Romans 7:24) Many Diotrephes' abound nowadays (3 John 9) but spiritual men are few and far between.

(2) They are most sober, steady, and objective.

Today, when someone claims to be "Born Again", one of the plausible signs is disorder¹, unpredictable, misguided zeal, pride and an impaired sense of judgment. Others abandon school and abrogate their civil duties all in the name of being zealous. Further, others behave as though they are actually intoxicated with alcohol and happily claim it is the Spirit of God at work in them! But what could be further from the truth! The Christian, according to the passage under consideration, draws a contrast from the usual drunkards. The Christian then is to be the most prudent and excellent clear thinker of the times.

(3) They emit light, warmth and fruit unsolicited.

Wherever they go, they carry with them a fragrance of God's grace and unawares speak for Christ with their lives. They do not have any funny stories surrounding them or their character but live a crystal clear life. (Ephesians 5:1-3) No one dares raise a malicious word against them because of their high integrity. Further, they produce the fruit of the Spirit as tabulated in Galatians 5.

(4) They are prayerful

They do not delight to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5) that they are "prayer warriors". But rather, they simply apply that biblical principle of closing the door behind them and praying to Him who knows what is done in secret (Matthew 6:6) their closets are full of sighs, tears and groaning. They determine not to rise from their knees until they have met with God! Far be it that they should content themselves with a five minutes "spiritual snack". Instead, the rest of the day they continue to offer ejaculatory prayers to God. As they walk, work, study or learn, prayer is always upon their heart (1 Thessalonians 5: 17; Colossians 4:2). When a prayer need is shared, they do not merely end at saying "I will pray for you" but take note and actually pray perseveringly as long as the need stands. They do not need reminders but prayer is part of them. Ephesians 6:18 is true of them. For another thing, they so trust God as their father that when they pray there is no iota of doubt in their hearts. They ask and expectantly wait for results (James 1:6 - 8). The saying is true "The closer I get to Jesus, the lesser I shout"².

¹ As at 1993

² Anonymous

(5) They are diligent in the study of the scriptures

Their Bible reading is not confined to the Lord's day morning service only but are daily engrossed in the Holy writ. They "soak their heads in scriptures" and devour them. To them, every word in the scriptures appears printed in golden print. They value and love the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and are never content with vague interpretation of the scriptures but diligently read and study the scriptures prayerfully. Quote a verse amiss and they instinctively detect and correct you! I have heard that the some religions memorize their scriptures very much. But this is just head knowledge only. The Spirit filled Christian however, meditates and hides the word in the most secure cabinets of their hearts so as to live out these things (Psalm 119: 9-11). The whole campus of their lives revolves around and is directed by the whole of scripture. Notice the manner in which they study – DILIGENTLY. They do not spare any efforts; they leave no stone unturned, but determine to know what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:10). They have a high reverence for the law of God and seek to apply every verse to their own lives. (Psalm 119: 97) yet in all these labours, they are firmly convinced that God the Holy Spirit must illumine their minds and open their eyes to grasp correct spiritual truths. For if He does not, their efforts, fall flat to the ground (Psalm 119: 18, 105).

(6) They are patient.

The Spirit filled Christian prays, plans, labours, and knows that ultimately only the Lord's plan will prevail (Proverbs 16: 1, 33). With respect to soul winning, the Christian does not force things on or decisions out of people. S/he faithfully preaches the word and leaves the rest to God. Never will you find him / her coercing people through that corrupt ritual of 'sinner's prayer' which hardens infidels and makes them twice the children of hell. He sows generously waiting upon the Lord. Now, waiting is not an easy grace even for the saints! But the Spirit filled is content to wait knowing that "though it tarries, it shall come", they say to their souls each day. (Habakkuk 2:3)

(7) They are Consistent in their daily lives.

Their public and private life does not differ. Just as they are in public, so are they in the closet perhaps even better! I have met people who make bold claims to be born again but their works bark loudly against them! "They are saints on their knees, but cheats in their shops"^x. Meet them in the corridors of college or in the streets, their language is evangelical in every sense but just step on one of their toes and you will see how the old man, akin to a land mine, raises his ugly head in protest against you. But not the spiritual saint! S/he is the same at all times and seasons. S/he does not use his freedom as a cover up for evil (1 Peter 2: 16) but rather seeks to glorify Christ in all areas so that they might be over joyed at the appearing of Christ (1Peter 2: 12, 2 Peter 1: 10, 11). In short, these Spiritual Christians make every effort, yea, are eager to add all the graces to their saving faith (2 Peter 1: 3 – 10). The less spiritual are content to know that all is well as long as they are "not sinning" or keeping away from the prominent public sins of the times. Not so with the holy! They are diligent about the matter of Christian progress (Philippians 2: 12). Working out their salvation with fear and trembling is an unmistakable mark for they know that they have a race to run and a prize to gain (Philippians 3: 12 - 14). They are not content to run along without encouraging a soul but rather, they exhort others to the same (Philippians 3:15). They have signed a rebellion treaty with the evil one that they are no longer in his service and therefore, throw off every weight that would hinder their rapid progress (Hebrews 12: 1). Truce with sin and Satan is never an

^x Thomas Watson, a racy Puritan and author of the Body of Divinity, among many others

option for them. In spiritual matters they run in such away as not to be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9: 26). How saintly their walk! How lovely their company! What heavenly reminders they are! It is said of one lady who got converted after Mr. Whitefield's death. "It was not any sermon that he preached, it was not anything that he ever said to me. It was the beautiful constancy and kindness of his daily life, in the house where he was staying, when I was a little girl. I said to myself, "if I ever have any religion, Mr. Whitefield's God shall be my God"[€]. 2 Corinthians 5:10 was deeply engraved on the good mans' heart. Oh for men like Whitefield in our day!

Our lot is cast in a time when many are loud but empty. Indeed they are a mere bag of wind. I fear that this age abounds with too much empty profession devoid of a holy life. Thankful should we be to the lord for the many professors of faith but I dare assert that I fear that myriads work harder to bring shame to the name of the Lord by their wicked, inconsistent lives "They are feared not because they are holy but harmful!"[∞]

(8) They are zealous and Industrious

These Spiritual Christians never rest here below but they know that they shall rest eternally in heaven from their labours. They are ever busy about the masters' business. You will never find them idling away or not employed. No, no, no!!! For the Spiritual Christian, a 24 hour day actually seems scarcely enough while to the idle, the day seems endless!

Perhaps, we may well ask, what is it that chiefly occupies these spiritual people? I offer a few suggestions:

- i. They know that there is a world dying in sin and therefore they must preach "as dying men to dying souls" They "preach as never sure to preach again, as a dying man to dying souls"[∞]. If it were possible, they could preach themselves to death! They possess an unflinching desire to spend and be spent for Christ.
- ii. They are busy helping the needy in their midst and are available at all times to listen to people's issues and to advise. They are not content to wait to be called upon but they actually go out. They never grow weary in doing good to all especially to the elect (Galatians 6:9, Titus 3:1). They know that the poor and needy will always be around therefore, they are sensitive and visit people in their homes, whilst maintaining the highest Christian ethical standards. They apply the apostolic formula of preaching in public and from house to house (Acts 20:20). Matthew 25: 34 – 36 is true about them in every sense.
- iii. They are busy in their calling. If they are students, they seek to be faithful to their studies. If formal or informal workers, they will be faithful to their calling. When they put their hands to the plough, they do not look back until the work is done. Soon the worldly notice and sneer at them but this does not deter the saints because they know that they are labouring as unto the Lord[∞]. Isn't it written in the scriptures that we should labour? (I Corinthians 15:58).

[€] Holiness, JC Ryle

[∞] Pastor Choolwe Mweetwa 1991

[∞] One of the remarkable sayings of a renowned Puritan, Richard Baxter who authored over 168 books in his life time in the 1600s

[∞] Colossians 3:23, I Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 6:7)

Isn't it true that whatever our hands find to do, we must do with all our might? (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Acts 20:34, 35, 2Thessalonians 3:7 - 10, I Thessalonians 4:11).

The list is endless. Suffice to say that spiritual people are bold, resolved, resilient, meticulous, zealous and unflinching in all their labours not caring about the opinion of men. They are always conscious that the time is short and soon their earthly tents are to be dissolved in death. How few Christians there are that exert themselves! I have seen many who are mere empty professors of religion offering lip service to Christ. They show no sign of spiritual life or vitality. Only the Spiritual know and discern 'the needs of the times'^v. Intuitive people, akin to the men of Issachar, are exceedingly few and far between (1 Chronicles 12: 32). Well said the good old English divine Jeremiah Burroughs that: "Those who serve God must give him their hottest love, their highest joy, their strongest faith, their greatest fear, they must act every grace, extend every faculty, improve every part...there must be head work and heart work in the ordinances" and the spiritual pass this test.

(9) They are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. – They dread the thought of grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4: 30) by:

1. Their lives (1 Peter 1: 12)
2. Their speech (Ephesians 4: 29)
3. Their reactions (Colossians 4: 6, Ephesians 4: 26, 27)

They also dread the thought of not keeping in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5: 25).

Spiritual saints do not make hurried coerced decisions or because the majority have a contra opinion. The Spirit of Caleb and Joshua lives in them. Further, they are like Israelites who would enquire of the Lord before going out to war. This is evident also when some thing seems evil and adverse, the spiritual always enquire from the master each step of the way (Judges 20: 18). Whatever comes into their lives, whether good or bad, it is firmly settled in their minds that all things are working to their good (Romans 8: 28, I Thessalonians 5:18b). When things appear to be seemingly out of control and all they see is a dark cloud of providence, their knees are all the more employed beseeching the Lord "what wilt you have me to learn?" and they, like St. Paul, ask that the thorn might be taken from them (2 Corinthians 12: 7 - 9). Should it please the Lord to leave it, they are content to wait until the final day. All the while, they are sensitive to God's lessons and leading knowing and trusting that He who called them did not only call them to believe on Christ but to suffer for him also (Philippians 1: 29).

See how these spiritual Christians depend upon God! See how they live one day at a time! See how they never live on past experience! To them, each day means a new opportunity to live for God! They live for eternity as though each day were their last. How they long and pant for the steps of Enoch (Genesis 5: 24)! It can be truly said of them that "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1: 21). Their holy panting may not be surpassed by a deer's longing for water! (Psalm 42:1)

(10) They are pragmatically hospitable.

Their huge mansions are not just merely full of air and expensive articles but the saints find their home an oasis. Each time, their home has a visitor recharging their

^v Refer to my earlier work called "Needs of our times" for a fuller treatment of this subject

souls and at no time do the financial implications come primarily on the host's mind. Sadly, some unscrupulous "saints" have abused these golden opportunities and kindnesses forcing the gracious doors to close. Be that as it may, the spiritual long to refresh more saints (Philemon 7, 3 John 5-8, Hebrews 13:2). Some homes remind one of prison while others give a foretaste of heaven.

But it is not only the wealthy and privileged to be hospitable alone, everyone must be! I have met some relatively poor saints that have been extremely hospitable far more than the financially sound.

(11) They are full of love (Agape) for the saints and fellowship.

The love of Christ is evident the first time you meet them, as they love God and His children. Being in their company makes one feel accepted, loved, appreciated and valued. The amazing thing is that they do all this sincerely with a pure heart and motive. They do not pick and choose who they will relate to nor do they befriend people contingent on possible egocentric gain. No conditions are attached, except of course holiness to the Lord. The spiritual are happiest when in the company of kindred minds, fellow pilgrims heading to the celestial city. Whether they meet you on the high way, by way or church grounds, their language is consistently pregnant with Christ. The nominal Christian is always talking about current affairs, careers, money, assets, afflictions and all the rest of it, unlike the seraphic saint. Granted, there is room to talk about all these things and it is prudent to be socially intelligent, but if these become a passion more than Christ, then there is a problem.

(12) They are intrepid.

These holy saints possess a unique rare valiant spirit of the martyrs who are ready to die for the cause of Christ. They are ready to suffer all things if only that Christ may be gloried in their suffering and death (Acts 20: 24, 21: 13). They are resolute to be filled with God and will not settle for less. As earlier intimated, the spirit filled Christians are as bold as a Lion (Proverbs 28:1), ready to die for their faith and the defence of the gospel (Jude 3). More than that, they are ready to lose all things for Christ, withstand contempt and also to persevere to the end. Although pride is far from them, they are none the less not afraid of man and what s/he can do to their mortal bodies. The spirit of the valiant army of martyrs flows through their veins, in nothing faint hearted or a quitter. In a nutshell, they are undaunted, stout hearted, heroic, dynamic, adventurous for the Lord, daring, indomitable and exceedingly brave for Christ.

(13) They are single minded as opposed to one track minded. They are predominantly people of one thing (Philippians 3: 12-14). Whatever they touch has a bearing on their one chief goal in life-- to please God (2 Corinthians 5:10). They will not rest till Christ is glorified either by life or by death (Acts 20: 24, Acts 21:13). The whole world is their parish as John Wesley once declared. Nothing ever detracts them from that single eye towards Christ. The race has to be finished, the faith to be kept and the fight fought. Many today have multiple ambitions and Christ is but a mere appendix to their lives.

(14) They are heavenly minded.

When you are in their company, they repeatedly talk about Heaven frequently and are always aware that they are in transit to another place (Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 11:14). Their minds often traverse the suburbs of heaven whilst their bodies are still on this terrestrial ball. They have a fore taste of glory divine and cannot wait to be wholly taken up into the mansions above at the resurrection. As such, they live lives that are worthy of God, unblemished, expectant, progressive and loathe sin. (2

Peter 3:11). When you meet with a nominal saint (If ever such a state exists), they will remind you of the earth and cause you to lick the dust like the serpent. By continued exposure to their lethal "gamma rays", you may be infected with the complaining disease that goes deep into your system. On the contrary, genuine believers keeping in step with the Spirit work extremely hard here below as they wait for the chariot of fire to come and carry them home, in full view of every eye.

(15) They are free from all forms of idolatry, worldliness and the love of money
The spiritual mind often orbits in the suburbs of Heaven. The mind is glued, baptised and filled with eternal things to the extent that the things of time are reckoned strangely dim. Spiritual saints are free from the love of money or anything that threatens to take the centre stage in their lives other than Christ (Hebrews 13: 5). They meticulously and jealously guard their hearts from the corrupting and tainting nature of sin. They hold on loosely to the things of this world, much like what M'Cheyne once said that the saints ought to meticulously handle the things of the world much like the chemist carefully handles hazardous chemicals in the laboratory. (I John 5:21, Hebrews 13:5, I John 2:15, I Timothy 6:3-6)

(16) They are discerning
Being close to God and keeping in step with the Spirit, the holy saint is able to detect spiritual issues despite being invisible to the naked eye. They are especially able to read between the lines and intuitively tell what the still small voice of God is saying. The witness of the Spirit enables them to know something before things become public knowledge.

How then is Spirit filling to be attained?

I confess that I am but a minor in handling this point but the master himself will aid us. Fasten your seat belts a little longer as we delve into these truths. I suggest a number of sure ways, which are the appointed means of grace:

- ❖ Be prayerful: (Colossians 4:2) – For you to know this work of God, converse much in prayer with the father. Close the door of your closet more often. Allow no one else in except God. Bruise the knee as often as possible. Talk to the father and tell him of your spiritual poverty. Isn't it written that they are blessed that hunger and thirst for righteousness? (Matthew 5: 6) Pray for yourself, needs, wants and wishes. Whenever you want something, the Father must first come to your mind. For He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3: 20). They that have spent much time in prayer have received much power from God. The Puritans used to say "trade much for souls". It is a quaint but true old saying that "They that seek education get what education offers; they that seek power and wealth get what riches offer but they that pray get power from God"[~]. It was a wonderful apt saying which went: "Do with your hearts as you do with your watches, wind them up every morning by prayer"^x. The saints of old loved communing much with God. Today, we are much too busy with the hustle and bustle of life to ever spend a single hour before the throne of grace. Oh sad and dry

[~] Anonymous

^x Thomas Watson in the Body of Divinity pp 266

times! But you can arise dear friend and make a difference in this prayer less generation.

❖ Diligently study the scriptures

If you would know the will of God, I suggest that you 'devour' the scriptures. Do not content yourself with reading a verse or two each day. But rather read whole chapters and books if possible! Read systematically from Genesis to Revelation and do not evade the difficult and obscure passages like those in the book of Leviticus. It is good to seek help and perhaps have a commentary by your side, which can be referred to only for clarification or comparison. Do not merely read the scriptures like any other literature but study the "deep things" of the faith such as Predestination (Romans 8:29), Election (Ephesians 1: 4), the Divine decrees, the Covenant of works and grace etc. Do not shy away from them because they sound monstrous at face value but rather be brave and trust the Spirit to lead you into all truth (John 16: 13). Many in our day lose out much under the plausible guise of "Doctrine divides, but love builds"! Ah! How the Devil gets the better of many! Myriads are out witted! (2 Corinthians 2: 11). No wonder they cannot tell their left from the right. They cannot smell the rat or detect error even when it is in their very nostrils! But they that depend upon the Spirit of God to teach them the scriptures can detect error on their spiritual radar screens long before it is launched! In short, they are no longer tossed to and from by every wind of doctrine or any fine sounding word. (Ephesians 4: 14, Colossians 2: 8).

But why must we diligently study the word?

I answer, that the Lord Jesus in John 17: 17 said that God should sanctify the saints by the truth for the word is truth. In other words, we are to imbibe, drink and devour the scriptures and as we do so, they begin to fill our minds and we shall constantly be musing over and talking about them (Colossians 2: 8-; 3: 16). The word possesses an inherent prowess and has a sanctifying effect upon our minds. Therefore labour to fill your mind to overflowing. Read! Read! Read, until your nerves almost burst!! I heard of a friend who burst an eye nerve due to hard University study but what more the love letter from God? Hear what the good old Bishop of Liverpool, JC Ryle once said, "But of one thing I am certain, there is no labour which will be so richly repaid as laborious regular daily study of God's word... ignorance, after all, is one of the best friends of false doctrine". Paul was a great lifelong student (2 Timothy 4: 13).

(3) Read sound Christian literature.

Did you know that what you read ultimately influences your thinking and your actions? Many a saint would rather read worldly magazines than pick a Christian book and read through, why? It is because of laziness and tragically, the evil one has outwitted many at this point. Others devour unsound "Christian" literature and paperbacks, how can one grow? I once heard of a Church where the young people zealously took turns in reading a blasphemous book called the "Davinci Code"[±] with great pleasure. All the while, the elders had no clue what the young inquisitive minds were filling their brains with. The bulk of the books on the market do not bring out sound Biblical edifying material but are full of current affairs, motivational talks (though good in the right dosages) and mere subjective experiences. Such literature must be avoided at all costs, if you are to grow in grace. It is a waste of energy and

[±] By Mr Brown, took the world by storm in 2005 and 2006.

money to read such. Note that in one sense, "imagination is the hot bed on which evil practices are hatched"^π meaning that what you feed your mind on, is most probably going to be entertained and then give birth to actual sin. If you would be Spirit filled, seek good literature that is Christo-centric that builds up the inner man. Be resolute and unflinchingly focused in your study schedule. You will not regret later because this is a life time investment. One more thing, ensure you have a systematic progression!

Note however that the best of men are but men at their best. They are prone to err. Therefore, I suggest that only after filling your mind barns with the holy scriptures should you venture to tackle 'bones' because then, you will be able to detect error from afar. Men are not infallible, but God is.

(4) Attend unto fellowship (Hebrews 10:25)

Christian fellowship is one of the means of grace which is needful in our day. Seek to be acquainted to some serious saints in the church those that are thorough going and all together Christians. Avoid Festus and King Agrippa's company (Acts 26:14 – 28). Ensure that you belong to a local church and are active. Aspire to be an Apollos (Acts 18:27). For by so doing, you get built up within. As you sit, speak and chat about eternal realities. Study the scriptures and repeatedly talk over and recite truths already learnt, retrace the ancient paths often, wasn't this practice of the apostle? (Acts 20:31; Philippians 3:1; 1 Timothy 4; 13; 2 Peter 1: 12 – 15; 3:1). I have noted that some are so filled with the logos that almost every sentence they utter has supporting scripture. These discourses help to build up the soul as Iron sharpens Iron*. Tragically, many remain dwarfs like pygmies for want of fellowship. They see no need or desire for fellowship. Read of the 'Holy Club' of the 1700s and note the results! Remember Whitefield, Cennick, Charles and John Wesley? They had the same root!

Kept in active and lively fellowship with other kindred minds you will most probably remain spiritually sharp and never lack in zeal (Roman 12:11). Indeed, their rich and much seasoned words are sweet tonics to the soul and having intermingled with them, you will desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ (Colossians 4: 6, 2 Peter 3:18).

As fellow saints share their joys, experiences and tell us of book reviews, which we have no access to or time to read, we are edified and built up in the inner man. Ah! How mutually edifying those talks are! How challenging and heart warming! Many a time I have felt something of what the apostles reported on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 32) Ah! God and man at table are sat down! A timely word might be of eternal encouragement to a fainting soul. I recall a seasoned word said to me by a brother at one time I was depressed at the University (1991). Things were extremely tough and my 'tourist days' were numbered. The brother suddenly appeared from nowhere and simply stated "Cast all your burdens on him, for he cares for you!" then he quickly hurtled away. What revolutionizing words they were! How so few saints of such a calibre do we have in our day!

(5) Evangelise: He who wins souls is wise. If you would know from what great depths God has salvaged you, then go and evangelise, you will notice that indeed salvation truly belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2: 9). Unless God quickens or makes them alive, they cannot come (Ephesians 2: 1) when you realize that you cannot save any

^π JC Ryle

* Proverbs 27:17

one in and of yourself, this will cause you to depend entirely on God by his Spirit to regenerate (Titus 3: 5). The new creation wrought in the soul is a divine work (2 Corinthians 5: 17) and therefore, all the glory and honour is due to God. John 6: 44 is a reality when on the mission field. Then only will you and I realize that our fight is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6: 12) and that the dead world lies in captivity of the Devil (2 Timothy 2: 26). Do you want to shine brightly in glory? Do you think you are wise? Then do evangelise. (Proverbs 11:30, Daniel 12:3, Matthew 13:43). Many fall short at this point. They fancy that the elect will definitely come to salvation any way despite the circumstances. But hasn't the Lord ordained that by the preaching of the word must the elect come home? (Romans 10: 17). Woe to him who does not preach Christ!

What then should be our message and mode?

The message must be simply "Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2: 2) and our mode must be not with under handed methods such as alter calls, sinners prayers and emotionally charged stories but rather in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. The prospect of being Christ's ambassadors should truly make one to tremble with fear! (2 Corinthians 5: 20). Co - workers with God? What a grand privilege! What grace! What a mind-boggling truth! We, who were once dead in sin, are now the very instruments God uses to call the elect home, mere mortals though we are!

(6) Administer regular self examination (2 Corinthians 13: 5). The holy often suspect their hearts and deliberately daily spend considerable amount of time watching the motions of the heart, much like the women folk who spend much time in front of the mirror. The mirror shows all the defects and beauty on the face and show the actual condition. In the same way, the holy frequently engage in serious and regular introspection as well as retrospection. It was common for the saints of old to engage in this practice, no wonder they had fewer character defects. It is said of one holy man, Robert Murray M'Cheyne that he used to meticulously watch the heart movements and often suspected it. He never forgot that the heart is deceitful and nigh impossible to handle with the arm of flesh. Jeremiah 17:9 always echoed at the back of the mind. More than that, he knew that sin itself was deceitful and had no handles with which to hurl it out! George Whitfield too often engaged in regular heart work and often lamented over his unworthiness and unwarranted pride. Yet, he is one of the humblest men to have walked the face of the earth. Among sinful mortals, he towers high above us.

I should think that the six suggestions should suffice for our purpose. But allow me to hurry on and add a few words of application.

We have seen that they that are spiritual are humble people. Labour to be humble from above for God exalts the humble and oppose the proud (James 4: 6; Proverbs 3:34). One reason, I think, why revival tarries is because the humble people are exceedingly few and far between while the spiritual Philistines far outnumber them. Go around and enquire for a humble person and you will discover that the opposite is more frequently true. Show me ten truly humble people in a Church and I will show you ten content rich men in the land. Pride comes in all forms and lately, it has even ascended to the pulpit! Where is the humility that characterized the apostle? Where is the humility that has been true of all the eminent saint is ages past? Where, where, where? If we would humble ourselves, God will surely fill us with his Spirit (II Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 33:3) Oh for humble hearts and mind! Oh for the humility of Moses! They that are humble are always conscious of their own vileness and

unworthiness before the master. Granted that pride is clearly etched on the foreheads of infidels but for professors, It is rather obscure; one needs to look a little closely to detect. However the spiritually discerning eye can perceive from afar. Hear what the old divines say: "Luther used to say, 'that a minister must take heed of bringing three devils into the pulpit, viz, pride, covetousness, and envy'" [‡]

(2) In the second place, labour to be prayerful at all times.

Our times are spiritually dry for want of people whose closets are flooded with their tears. 'Jesus rose from the dead but many can't even rise up from their beds'.[×] Few are "early risers" and seek to imitate the master who thought was God – incarnate prayed as no men ever prayed. Notice how he prayed:

- i. He withdrew from the busy schedule of the day frequently Luke 4: 42
- ii. He woke up a great while before dawn. (Mark 1: 35)
- iii. He went to a specific secret place where no one probably knew (Mark 1: 32 b,
- iv. He prayed with loud cries and groans (Hebrews 5: 7, Matthew 26: 39, 44, Mark 14: 36)

This was the Son of God at prayer! If he prayed thus, how much more ought we to pray? If God could pray so fervently, this surely is a challenge and a rebuke to many! Many delight to be seen (noticed) of men in public by their loud charismatic prayers, and rapid chants as though they are about to vomit or feel nauseatic!

On the other hand we have people who pray with a very orderly logical and a lot of this evangelical jargon. If one does not pray accordingly, they are judged as less spiritual! There is no earnestness or life in those forms at all! Note that rich prayers are most desirable in our days but there should be some flame in the prayers not mere formal, ice cold, deep freezer prayers!

Oh for a praying heart like that of the Master! Oh for a praying desire like that of David Brainerd! Oh for a praying faith like that of George Mueller! Such prayerful people are indeed scarce in our day! They are scarcer than the pearl of great price.

I dare say that he who prays trades more for souls than he who is 'Loud mouthed' for Christ but is inconsistent in prayer. Labour dear friend towards this mother of all graces. For in it, you're in direct dialogue with the father Himself.

(3). Thirdly, Note that prayerful spiritual people also give all diligence to scriptural studies.(I Timothy 4: 15a)

There are very few with a Berean spirit in our day (Acts 17: 11). Many are content to be mere listeners of the word (James 1: 22) spoken by preachers and do not bother to check whether these things are so. To some extent, they regard the preachers to be infallible or 'always right' as long as they are earnest and cook up really good stories to blow away their problems (for a season) but not so with the Bereans! We are told that they searched the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Notice

1. The attitude of the Bereans. They did not take anything for granted or leave anything to chance but rather, were diligent in comparing scripture with scripture! Is this your attitude? Is the word the final authority or is it the Pastor? For want of this Berean spirit, I have heard of a Pastor who had the guts to declare thus: "Don't you know that a Pastor has the power to add or

[‡] Thomas Brookes Works Volume three pp210

[×] Keith Green

subtract from the word?" No finger was raised in protest nor was he queried because the congregation was grossly ignorant, not knowing their left from the right.

2. Notice who spoke to them. It is no other than the great Apostle Paul. No doubt his fame as a preacher and teacher had been well spread abroad yet these noble Bereans searched the scriptures in order to understand. It's not that they doubted Paul, but they were noble minded. Paul was an apostle and note that an apostle was infallible with regard to the word. (Ephesians 2: 20) Oh for a Berean spirit! O for such an attitude to study the law of God carefully and diligently. Labour to soak yourself too as was said of John Bunyan that if you pricked him, what would come out would be BIBLE not blood! This is not an impossible feat with God on your side. It is possible to be an Ezra in this age. (Ezra 7: 6, 10)

(4) Fourthly, note that patience is the need of the hour. Things round about us are rapidly changing. This is an age of technology, learning, thought and civilization. All these are hemming in around us to begin to employ a 'capsule gospel' on the "frying pan". But we must determine to maintain the old apostolic way. Our ancient path is now overgrown with weeds because many modern light - weight evangelicals have long abandoned the route. They no longer start in Jerusalem, nor progress to Judea or to Samaria and the world over. The opposite is true. Patience, Patience, Patience, is the Christian grace that has suffered at the hands of many a saint. We need patience in our evangelism. Let us cease to coax men into sinners prayers rather let us simply be faithful in planting and watering the seed. God alone will make it grow. Never at any time be complacent in the work but have a 'Holy patience'. Some, in the name of "patience" have grown cold. Let us be on guard against this extreme too. (1 Corinthians 3: 7 - 8)

(ii) In our lives. As we relate one to the other, let us ensure that this grace is evident in our lives. Many a soul seems patient until stepped upon their toes once, twice and then they explode! Christians need this grace in order to withstand the pressure from the world and to hear the still small voice from God. The lack of this virtue costs us much. No wonder many are abandoning the faith at lightning speed! Why? What is the explanation? I boldly assert that it is because of lack of patience to let God do the sanctifying work. We want to do the regenerating instead of God. If you are patient, you will hear God speaking to you and he will fill you.

(5) Fifthly, They that would be useful in their generation and leave an indelible mark are consistent both in their public religious profession and life. For there is such a thing as winning without verbally preaching the word (1 Peter 3: 1). Their lives are Holy both in their public life and in the closet. Such people are scarce in our day. Many are "Holy" saints at church but little devils in their homes. Labour dear friend, to match your life and profession. I have known people who are excellent in their knowledge but their lives are almost wrecks, their life sanctity does not correlate to the amount of knowledge they boast about. "They have a good head but a corrupt heart". The opposite is equally true of many who have a 'large heart' but that is in word of mouth only and that to some certain extent only. Since they do not have sufficiently knowledge of the word, they make blunders at every turn. When they make a mistake, they quickly cover up their tracks or look back wondering what has hit them! True to say that the desire is there, but hindrances abound. What is the explanation? What can be done? My answer is simple - it is lack of Biblical knowledge and thus no Biblical guiding principles. The only remedy is to study the Bible consistently with much prayer. Would you leave an indelible mark on your age?

Labour to be consistent in your life and profession. The spiritual maintain a delicate balance is life and doctrine, meticulously watching both areas (I Timothy 4:16)

(6). In the sixth place, notice that the most zealous and industrious people are frequently people who often spend much time with the master. After their hearts have been heated red hot akin to iron, they step into each day with great determination and unflinching desire to serve the Lord. These people usually have no time for slander, gossip or malice. This is because on the doors of their heart is written (printed) boldly "ENGAGED" so that the devil has no opportunities to give them alternative evil work. On the contrary, the idle minded are easily employed by the Devil because when he comes along, he finds the doors of their hearts ajar. At first he does not know whether they are employed so he peeps once or twice. When he notices the big empty room, he quickly throws in his hand 'grenade' of temptations and take cover waiting to hear the great explosion to his pleasure. Scan through church History, who are they that have fought good fights of faith? Isn't it the most busy and industrious? Think of Elijah, Elisha, Moses and Paul, to mention but a few. What is it that made them tick? What made them wield the truth on heathenism with such might? I suggest that they resolved to 'spend and be spent for Christ'. Never were they idle but worked hard at all times sparing no effort. No wonder they redeemed the time! No wonder they were always urgent about the master's business!

It is painfully true that many in our day are lazy and have give themselves to more emotionalism. Many have ceased to use their heads and hence their hearts are out of control. Holy Job dreaded such a position (Job 31: 7, 9) On the one hand, some depend too much on the arm of flesh while on the other, many have given themselves to just pursuing good feelings! But Nay, this must not be! Would you be helpful in our times? Labour to spend and be spent for Christ (ROMANS 8: 14,16).

(7). In the seventh and last place, the spiritual are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit of God. They are not content with what merely looks right to the human eye. For Eve saw with her eye and sinned (Genesis 3: 6). At every point, they enquire of the Lord because they know that the Christian life is not 'the open door principle.' They are always aware that they carry within them a desperately wicked heart (Jeremiah17: 9) and so, they do not trust their hearts. They are painfully aware of the civil war within the members of their bodies and many a time they have cried out with St. Paul "what a wretched man I am!" (Romans 7: 24). But their comfort has been that Jesus Christ is all in all (Romans 7: 25). This shows them that they are alive spiritually. With this knowledge of human depravity the spiritual always enquire of the Lord to be sure. The Lord does lead such ones and their spiritual sun is always overhead and never obscured. Circumstances round about them might be bad but they rejoice always (I Thessalonians 5: 16). How we need such in our day! How very few true Israelites are compared to the Amalekites and the Philistines!

Are you sensitive, O'reader to the leading of the Spirit? Are you sure that you are not grieving the Spirit? (Ephesians 4: 30)

Would you be sensitive? Then labour to be taught of God daily. Listen carefully to that still small voice 'a great while before down?

Thus, we have laboured to answer that question of what it is to be Spirit filled. Now we pass on to consider the next query:

WHAT ARE THE TRUE, SURE AND CERTAIN EVIDENCES OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIAN? (Psalm 119: 164)

Having successfully laboured to show in the preceding verse what it means to be filled with the Spirit, we now move on to consider the 19th and 20th verses which are practically the fruit, out flow or the result of being filled with the Spirit. It is a settled matter that having been filled with the Spirit certain fruit or graces must necessarily manifest. They do not have to be forced out but spontaneously flow out as naturally from the heart just as breathing is. Though these graces flow out naturally, it must be noted that the degree of manifestation varies from person to person as the Spirit Himself enables.

It is important to note here that a close look at verses 19 & 20, the much talked about "evidence of speaking in tongues" is conspicuously absent. Why? What is the reason? I believe that blessed apostle knew too well that many come in sheep's clothing and the Devil Himself masquerades as an angel of light! (2 Corinthians 11:14 and 2 Corinthians 2:11). But there are certain graces that are particularly and only truly found in genuine saints. These graces cannot be mistaken.

It is true that the evil one can also fabricate these graces to some extent like the magicians of Pharaoh in Moses' time (Exodus 7). Yet beyond a certain point, they cannot go, just like the magicians failed at some point and simply exclaimed. "This is the finger of God!" (Exodus 8: 19) so also, the non-Christian has this ability to imitate certain graces to a degree much like the genuine article. I once befriended a professing Christian at our church many years ago. He seemed to have a clear grasp of the scriptures, which baffled and amazed us, considering his spiritual age. But his little inconsistencies betrayed him in the end. He was later discovered to be a counterfeit believer after having wrecked havoc, swindling and stealing from the saints. The saints discerned late because of being so trusting. This (trickery and counterfeit believers) is true in all circumstances regardless of one's location. Always remember that the heart is desperately wicked and deceitful (Jeremiah 17: 9, Genesis 6: 5, 8: 21, Psalm 51: 5, 58: 3). The old evil trinity of the world, the flesh and the Devil are all too powerful for the depraved mind. It must therefore be borne in mind as we cross this stream that only the Christians will be allowed in the canoe or else when the canoe capsizes only Christians having life jackets will swim across to safety. The non-Christian will simply sink for lack of external help. (I have heard of a Devil worshipper who reached a post of Deacon without being detected or discovered in a certain Charismatic church).

We now turn to our immediate context as we seek to answer the question set before us. It is clear that tongues (if they exist today) are not an absolute evidence of Spirit filling.

The passage under consideration tells us that having been Spirit filled, the believer develops a unique attitude of mind and behaviour characteristic of all saints. These unmistakable traits are listed down for us:

- 1) "Speak to one another with Psalms..." This is the first result. They that are filled with the presence of God are always joyful people. They are always seeking to recite the Psalms. It is reported from church history that the church used to exclusively sing Psalms until about the 16th or 17th Century. The apostle says 'speak'. This implies that the saints are to retrieve those mighty truths or thoughts about God from the deepest recesses of their hearts bringing them to the fore so that at every point they cannot help but

bubble out and recite the wonders of our God. They should 'think aloud', as it were. Wherever they are, whether at home or abroad, on the bus, train, in the office or at home. Everywhere, it is God! God! It was once said about the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones that he was just too "full of God". The Puritans used to say that we should be "swallowed up in God" or that Heaven should be in us before we are in heaven.

But what is a Psalm? The careful reader of the scriptures will not fail to notice that these are sacred writings penned down by the children of God having passed through various circumstances. This is true of the eminent Psalmist David or his choir master Asaph. These saints of old would pen down these musings and contemplations of their hearts and would sing them to the glory of God. Note for example Psalm 51. This is a confessional prayer of David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). See how rich the Psalm is! See how heartbroken and sad he was! Obviously, when the children of God toy around with sin, they cannot escape unscathed because God loves them and thus disciplines them (Hebrews 12:6, Revelation 3:19).

Secondly, notice Asaph in Psalm 73 as he pours out his heart after a depression. These are the holy thoughts and laments that ran through the minds of the children of God and they learnt something as a result. The bulk of the Psalms are full of joy and jubilation about our great God. Note that all the Psalms are God-centred (Theo-centric) and man is out of the picture! This is the characteristic mark of highly spiritual souls, they debase themselves and exalt God. Rarely will you hear them talking about the self but are always meditating and pouring out praises to the maker. Is this your situation? Is this true of your soul every day? Can Psalm 145: 1 – 2 be true of you? I have met one saint who is always full of God! He visited a Christian friend for a few days. Every morning, he would be seen going off and at his return, the first word he uttered when you met him or when he returned from work was of the Lord. The hosts' relatives were wondering what the 'visitor' did for a living. Just before his departure, they discovered that the good man was actually a high profile medical Doctor! Ah! See how spiritual people are! They are full of God all the time. In their speech, conduct and life, it is Christ! Christ! Christ! Apart from being Christo-centric, these people desire to be holy rather than happy. To them, holiness is a root grace which must be had at all costs. They would rather die than live a life of a "spiritual cabbage". At every point, they ensure that their walk is right with God and as a result, they rejoice. Psalms then, are a version of words especially from the scripture which are full of praise to Jehovah for His great Acts of providence and love. This point alone knocks out the notion in our day of claiming that the speaking in tongues is the evidence. Reader, Are you full of Psalms in your heart? Are they part of your fibre and blood stream? If this be not the case, I have serious doubts to your spiritually.

- 2) In the second place, our text tells us "Hymns and spiritual songs" I deliberately take these together because I think they are twins and must necessarily flow together. Hymns are said to be metrical composition of praises to God or an exalted being. In our text, obviously the object of our worship is the triune God who alone is exalted. These songs and words from within the hearts of the believer are carefully organized and written down. Then they are sung

regularly almost like psalms. These, I believe, are also a means of grace. They took over from psalm singing in the church (i.e. in the late 17th and 18th century) and John Wesley strongly believed that they were a powerful tool for disseminating truth and rightly so. How rich the hymns are! How they condense great truths in few lines! The spiritually fertile mind feasts much on these hymns because the songs stimulate them to wholesome thinking. These hymns are also God – centred and depict the dealings of God with the saints. I believe hymns are almost as old as the church because they must have been sung regularly. The Lord sang hymns (Matthew 26:30) and so did the Apostles (Acts 16:25). Some portions of scriptures are believed to have been part of hymns of worship from the early first century (e.g. Philippians 2:6-11, I Timothy 3:16). Isaac Watts revived English hymnody and is thus rightly called “the father of English hymns”. As a result, thousands of songs flowed from the pens and hearts of later English and Welsh hymn writers like Charles Wesley (about 6,500), Fanny Crosby (over 8,000), Frances Ridley Harvage, William Williams, John Ryland, John Bunyan, Martin Luther, William Cowper, John Newton just to mention a few. African and other hymn writers also abound. These individuals were filled with praise and worship to God! Spiritual saints do not content themselves in just reciting dead cold sentences in church but they think, muse, and create new songs. Church history is replete with such holy souls and I am sure we have demonstrated in part what we mean a few sentences ago. In Mark 14:26, we read that the Lord Jesus sang a hymn with the apostles. I think that these hymns should have crowned the occasion of the Lords’ supper! How heart warming it must have been! “God and man at table are sat down”! If the lord himself sung, how much more us! Further, in Acts 16:25 we read of Paul and Silas singing hymns! They were in prison and their outward comforts unpleasant they sang! The Holy Spirit led Dr Luke to record! There are evidently jubilant tones suggested in those words. Praying and singing hymns to God! They did not care who was listening or whether they could be stopped for we are told that the other prisoners were. There was an element of praise and evangelism here! Notice that they were “free among the captives”. Spiritual saints are always free regardless of the circumstance. Despite difficult and hard adverse circumstances, the saints can still sing praise to God for his goodness. Note thirdly, the hour at which they sung, at midnight! In our day, many will have been fast asleep like a log but not so with them! Psalm 119:52 was true of them in every sense. Genuine saints never cease to glorify the lord. They are ever rejoicing and always singing to the Lord. (1Thessalonians 5:16, Philippians 2:5)

The other characteristic mark of the spiritual, with regard to singing, is that they love to be in the house of the lord so as to sing with the other saints (Acts 2:46, 47). I am reminded of my earlier days in the faith, I intensely longed to meet with the saints every day, if it were possible, so as to sing hymns together to the Lord. The truly spiritual cannot help but desire to memorize those hymns and talk about them or sing to the lord from memory. They are not content to be always reading in order to sing properly, but rather they want every line to be engraved upon the tablets of their hearts. They internalise & commit to memory. As they sing, they sing out of conviction thus worshiping God in the process. Our lot is cast in which hymns and spiritual songs are scorned. Many delight in chanting meaningless and endless choruses. Sometimes, the said songs only contain one or two words! As the people chant, they get “warmed up” for praise and will not feel they have worshipped sufficiently unless this cranking occurs, claiming cannot get off the ground. Only then do they feel they have worshipped. The spiritual Christian however, wants to sing intelligently to the Lord and to mean every word. I have known of one man who is of low estate in society yet this man is a mine of hymns and scripture! He has imbibed

these hymns and rarely uses the hymnal. He has internalised and committed to memory those rich great hymns. To me, that is a marvel and a challenge!

Do you want to memorize hymns and spiritual songs? Then regularly sing in your private devotion. Always aim to do "Justice" to every hymn or song you sing. Muse, ponder and think over the hymns. Aim that the authors' experience be yours too. Endeavour to know what the circumstances that inspired the writing of a particular hymn.

- 3) We pass to the third point where we read "Sing and make music in your heart". It is good to note that not only should we content ourselves in singing the spiritual legacies left to us from ages past but we must desire to grow in this grace also. It is interesting to note that the apostle begins with "Sing and make" What did he mean? Why did he use both those words? I offer some suggestions.
- i. Sing: We must not only speak to one another these Psalms and spiritual songs, but we should go further to actually sing these things wherever we are. We are to talk, sing and make other spiritual music which will be of future benefit to ensuing generations. Our attitude should be like that of the Israelites concerning the Lord being one (Deuteronomy 6:16-19). Having been commanded and learnt the great truths of the faith, these should flow out of us in love to God and to the brethren. Every time, the lord Jesus should be on our lips and as we meditate on his eternal love us ward, these should melt our hearts to the glory of his name. The Puritan era has been an age in which a lot of Christian truth was revealed such that the present age is simply "swimming in their labours". They were people who spent much time with the Master and thus, they got great insight into the word. They were spiritual men. I fear that our age, in many senses, fails to make significant progress in singing to the lord from the heart partly because of time lack and weak consecration. Many do not have time to meditate upon the wonders of God's grace and creation. William Williams, a Welsh preacher composed the great hymn "Guide me thou great Jehovah" as he rode amidst the beautiful Welsh country side hills. He repeatedly marvelled at God's revelation in creation. The Christian Church has marched through the ages as a singing Church. Remember the Israelites, they sang to the lord and the walls of Jericho eventually crumbled. They that are spiritual always sing to God at any place, time and occasion. Is it true of you, dear friend? If not, labour to be filled with God's truth, for what will you sing about if you are bankrupt of spiritual truth and experience?
 - ii. Make: We have already alluded to the fact that the Puritans treasured hymns. Note also that they were original and productive in many of their literary works. What is the reason? Why them? I suggest that they not only spent time in the closet, but they were great spiritual thinkers too. Having been filled with truth, they could not help but vent out these things in volumes which we cannot thoroughly read or reprint! Colossians 3:16 best describes them. Spiritual thinkers will usually be most productive. The apostle says "make" This is not something that has to be forced out of ourselves but it is spontaneous. Making implies constructing or composing something new, harmonious and sweet to the glory of God. Making sweet melodious music is backed by the following, among many:
 1. Knowledge: The song author must have a deep experiential and mental knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. S/he must have experienced a thorough conversion to the Lord and are progressively adding other graces to their armour (2 Peter 1:3-11). One of these prince graces is Knowledge. This

knowledge must fill, yea, saturate the saints' mind to the extent that it is difficult to suppress. This deep knowledge easily bubbles out spontaneously mingled with deep humility.

2. Prudence: Having acquired the knowledge, the author must be prudent in going about stating the truth in the best way possible. Many are of two opposite extremes. Some have knowledge but no prudence while others have no knowledge but too "prudent" to the extent they become useless.

Dr .M Lloyd Jones often complained that the 20th century was not original in most of its art but nearly borrowed or improved on old works and designs .This, I think, in some sense the curse of the times. The rise of the Charismatic wing of the church has made many a saint dull. It has been rightly asserted by some that "Arminianism makes people dull! We live in rapidly changing times. It is a hurrying and bustling age, people are too busy rushing to some unknown destination such that they have no time to be pen men of many a glorious hymn or song. Our ranks are filled with large crumbs of meaningless choruses.

It must be noted that the apostle states that this singing and making of melody should be from the heart to the lord. Note that in all these praises, God is the object. As we sing the melodies in our hearts, these warm and edify us inwardly just as one drinks water to quench a severe thirst. These melodies soothe and uplift us as we meditate upon God and His goodness us ward. They that spend much time with God are full of praise such that they cannot help but praise the great God of Heaven. It is regrettably true that what passes largely in our land in the name of "Christian" is merely humanism in a modern dress. At that centre all these emotions and songs are the enjoyment of the self and not the glory of God. Oh for people who desire God's glory only! Oh for more Asaphs and Davids in our times! For our days are indeed dry days. Reader, do you freely make melody in your heart? If we were to somehow open your heart, would we hear the sweet melody to the Lord as we hear on certain telephone receivers (Transferring ring tone)? Do you have any melody at all? Can we read 1 Thessalonians 5:16 on your face? They that are spiritual often have spiritual "Volcanic eruptions" in the sense that they battle to maturely contain the spiritual praises within their breasts. These joys suddenly break loose and vent themselves out. They offer the sacrifice of praise to God. Oh for such men as Charles Wesley in our times! Oh for more men who possess both a good head and heart! We ask again, is your heart Theo – centric? Is it your chief delight when the almighty is glorified in your life? Ah! It is lamentably true that in our times at every turn, we meet many false professors who know nothing of this inward rejoicing! Many indeed 'carry Bibles in their hands and not Christ in their breasts!' They spiritual do not end at simply making music and singing to the Lord, but they go further, letting Christ be all in all. The triune God is the object of their first desire and should this desire be met, they are over joyed. At every moment, place and time, they would like to shout out to the world that God is their chief good. They would more than willing ascend the highest mountain or sky scraper and shout that Jesus is Lord – to the glory of God the father. As a result of being filled with the Spirit, the spiritual are ever joyful, thankful and always cheerful in one way or the other depending on their temperaments. They sing with Charles Wesley thus:

"My gracious Master and my God
Assist me to proclaim
To spread through all the earth
Abroad the honours of thy name"

Again, they would say with Wesley:

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great redeemers praise,
The glories of my God and King
The triumph of His grace"

The spiritual feel as though their one tongue (mouth) is scarcely adequate to vent out spiritual incense to the lord. They pant, long, faint and die to sing to the glory of the Lord. They do not for a moment sing to be seen of men but this praise rises from the secret spring of their heart to eternity! Ah! What a frame of mind and spirit! What joy unspeakable!

In the next place, the apostle continues to catalogue the things that naturally flow out in the Spirit filled in the present verse. St Paul "slides" on the blessed truths that be in all true Christians saying that whatever befalls them, they should give thanks. The Apostle further says that the saint should be in a spiritual frame of "always giving thanks..." amidst all the making melody though meticulously conscious that we have a restless enemy prowling around (1Peter 5:8) seeking someone to devour. Realising that he cannot totally destroy the elect, he will shrewdly attempt at all costs to disturb, harm or discredit them. Therefore the apostle seems to be saying, "Despite your adversary, know that nothing ever happens by accident. All things have decreed 'ere time begun". This thought always comforts they that have known that even Satan is but a mere servant of God doing His bidding (Job). This being the case, the Christian has a powerful foundation to walk through serpent, land mines and all dangers that meet him at every turn. Well said good Mr. Ryland:

Plagues and deaths around me fly:
Till he bids I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.

Yes! Only till the sovereign ruler of the skies sees fit! We are immortal till our work is done! Oh what blessed truth this is! What heart melting and warming!

It must be noted that whereas many Christians hold truth consciously or unconsciously, only the Spirit filled greatly rejoice and their hearts are stirred within them with holy joy! The others have them very well tacked away in the "deep freezers" of their mind and these truths are inaccessible even to themselves when they extract them they are fast bitten and stone hard ah! Not so with the spiritual souls. For they know that all things work together for good. (Romans 8:28, 29) No matter the plagues that fly around some even chipping off the skin on the surface of their eyeballs, yet they stand boldly and say "In all things". They do not do this as a mere show of pomp but nay, it springs from the heart! Some of the things that cannot submerge or drown the spiritual are the following:

1. Terminal afflictions such as illness – These are areas where many a soul fails to sing and to give thanks to God. Some have terminal disease like cancer or AIDS (presently) but I dare say that the spiritual can offer spiritual sacrifice of praise to God. Read church History and see how the great army of God's chief soldiers have been afflicted and yet have marched on! At this point, a man like John Calvin comes to mind! Despite having over 42 diseases in his body at the same time, the man laboured on! He had a frail constitution yet look at

his fertile mind! He rejoiced as he burned the midnight candle penning down those ecstatic joys upon his heart.

Not even the asthma could quench the desire!

Another is Mr. Richard Baxter. What an industrious fellow he was! He has written so much that most of his works have not been able to be reprinted. They are too massive! He is said to have written books like "The Reformed Pastor" on his sick bed! His indeed was a smooth pen! Not only was he mighty with the pen, he was a gracious Pastor too. He ensured that he visited and catechised his flock, always at his master's business. St. Paul would have patted him on the back for faithfully following his example (Acts 20: 20). And yet this man had stones in the kidneys! I do not have time to talk about other bright beacons like Whitefield, Spurgeon as well as those heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11: 32. In our own times, I have heard of a boy who praised God for the leukaemia that befell him. To his dying day, all was well with his soul and he could triumphantly say, "where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?"

The holy saint can look at death in the face and yet rejoice. In fact, he can scorn and tease death!

I have also met a person who, though having a brain tumour, could rejoice. She was at one time almost unconscious and was mumbling many things. Yet in all those clear though disrupted words, she was bubbling with praise! The Pastor aptly remarked to us, "See what chiefly occupies her mind, Christ!" O friends! These afflictions though chronically painful, the Spiritual look at them through the eye of faith and thus rejoice. This is unlike many in our age that think and wrongly propagate that all sickness is from the Devil! Some even dare say that a Christian should not get sick! What would they say about Timothy, Trophimus and Epaphroditus? (1 Timothy 5: 23, 2 Timothy 4: 20, Philippians 2: 26) me thinks that these were spirit filled and yet were mortals. St. Paul is another! These, I echo, cannot stop the Christian from rejoicing and giving thanks!

2. Outward needs: Our lot is cast in an age when things are increasingly becoming difficult to acquire. Even the bare necessities of life are hard to come by. It must be confessed that the lack of these are hard times and trying too. The mind is unsettled and at all times, the saint is forced to be on the lookout for means of survival. Many grow tired of asking or "begging" yet in all these doldrums, the Spiritual can rejoice because they have given all cares to the Lord. (Peter) a day's problems are enough (Matthew 6: 31 - 34). They labour responsibly and yet in wardly, they are singing melodiously to be Lord. Though outwardly they are wearing out, yet inwardly they are being built up in to a spiritual mine! (2 Corinthians 4: 16). The blessed apostle knew much of these sufferings and yet he learnt to be content in whatever circumstances (II Corinthians 11: 21 - 29, Philippians 4: 12, 13). St. Paul learnt the Secret. It is indeed a secret only revealed to the Spiritual. For as wants and wishes mount, they look more earnestly to the master who provides all things. They are soothed to know that these are but momentary afflictions (2 Corinthians 4: 7) and soon they shall go to glory! Oh! what a blessed thought to know, that one day we shall be transported above. To see Christ as he is! (I John 3: 26) Christ becomes all in all to the Spiritual saint. In case the reader might think that Paul was some "Super human," look at the Hebrew Christians, how they endured! They lost all things and yet were willing even to lose their lives! (Hebrews 10: 32; Hebrews 11). They that are

spiritual acknowledge with a hearty "Amen" that to be with Christ is far better but it is needful that they tarry here for a while. (Philippians 1: 24). They are of good cheer (John 16: 33) despite the odds. Skimming through history reveals that truth has never been popular and some of the greatest sufferings have been endured. At the end of the day, Christ has been honoured. For example look at that "tinker" Mr. John Bunyan! It is said that he lived and died a poor man. Great were his outward needs and yet he was spiritually rich towards God! The Pilgrim's progress is a timeless monument. At times, we think that those who often have outward need often are richer spiritually and are evidently more joyous. The outwardly rich are usually too engrossed in pursuing and maintaining property such that their spiritual lives are almost suffocated! This is evident today. The wealthy west has such spiritual poverty while the poorer countries are richer spiritually! The west needs missionaries now.

3. Misunderstandings and persecutions (2 Timothy 3: 12) – The Christian is faced with those enemies – the world, the flesh and the Devil, yet I dare add a fourth enemy, the "forces within the church" Our day is filled with controversies and squabbles trivialities such that there is a lot of unnecessary dust being raised in the church. Some know too much truth and have no outlet, therefore, they vomit it out in its most concentrated form! Granted this is needed in the right context, but the bulk just speak out anyhow. In the process they are misquoted and misunderstood. "Persecutions" arise in the form of gossip, slander, back biting etc. The saint can easily be forced to recoil in a corner and shy away and but not so with the spiritual! Though they face lions and other wild beasts and (2 Timothy 4:17^d, I Corinthians 15:32) still confidently march on, knowing that their master was persecuted first and they are not exempt. As long as they are sure that they rightly stand for Christ, they care not for their reputation but are content to wait for the final summons on the last day (I Peter 4: 15 – 16). It is said of Mr. Whitefield once said that he did not so care about his reputation that he is said to have uttered some words which baffled his hearers. I am equally baffled. He wished simply words to be written on his epitaph which read "Here lie the remains of Mr. Whitefield. What sort of man he was the last day will tell!"

Oh, what a spiritual Man he was! How many in our day have such a spirit? Most of us are busy fencing and decorating our images and ensuring that nothing bad is said about us – even at the expense of truth! Our whole stamina is exhausted on our own defence that we do not even have strength to rejoice or evangelise! But the apostle states that all that seek to be godly will inevitably be persecuted. I fear many preach not Christ for fear of being persecuted (Galatians 6: 12; 5: 11) instead; they fabricate stories and preach current affairs! Notice that at all times St. Paul was being pursued by the Jews (e.g. Acts 16 & 17) and yet he waxed bolder and confounded them!(Acts 9:22). Apollos is another in Acts 18. He was a learned humble Man and the scriptures have no time to either slander or to take to heart every slanderous accusation lest they hear their own servant cursing them! Ecclesiastes 7: 21 is a hanging jewel around their necks!

The apostle says we should give thanks for all situations. But take note to whom we are to direct this thanks. It is to God himself all our situations must be

^d Legend has it that the person alluded to is most probably NERO. Genuine godly saints can also face wild beasts for the sake of Christ and even have their reputation ripped apart and torn to pieces for the sake of Christ!

interpreted so as to bring glory to the triune God. We should give thanks to God the father for his all wise decrees, which work out, for our good. The Spirit should be thanked for making the things of Christ so lively and warm upon our breast, we should also give thanks to the Son who procured our redemption and through him all spiritual prayer should be directed to the triune God. Why should we do thus?

Well, I suggest that only right because he is God and because Christ ever lives to intercede for us. All the prayers that the Son offers to the father are effectual and thus, it is only fitting that Christ should be our high priest. Some trust in other mediators but not so the saint! The spiritual Christian even feels edified at the mention of the name Jesus because he is all in all. No wonder then the Apostle says that we should give thanks to the Father for everything because Jesus is Lord and King of our lives. However, only the spiritual have this sensible feeling that only Christ must present our prayers to the Father knowing that He himself understands our frame having gone through it. (Hebrews 2: 17, 18; 4: 15) The other Saints have this knowledge neatly laid on the shelves of their minds in countless volumes and when they pray, they have double minds and more by sight rather than by faith! But the spiritual are every running to Christ with a simple faith! (James) They never doubt God but trust him at all times. No matter the outward prospects, Christ is all in all. Isn't it true that the Lord exhorted the Saints to pray through his name? (John 14: 14) Hither to that time, perhaps the apostles had not known or thought of praying through Christ knowing that they had the high temple priest to sacrifice through. But the God – Man opens their minds by pointing to no other than Himself that they should ask for anything in His name. In saying this, the Lord Jesus was in effect telling the disciples that He was the only high priest who could be heard always. The others were rendered "not needed" because God, in the person of Christ had finally opened the door. I offer a number of reasons why we must needs pray through Christ.

(I) He is the mediator between God and Man. – Christ entered his priestly office he was there as a mediator and yet as a lamb to be slain! This lands was spotless, perfect his body on the tree thus atoning for our sins forever. Therefore, whenever Christ goes before the father, he pleads our case on the basis of his finished work on the cross (John 19:30) when the father looks at this atonement, he is appeased and allows us in his presence. This fact and truth always warms the hearts of the spiritual because it baffles their minds to know that a Holy God could justify sinners! This is cause enough to warm any heart.

Myriads of professing Christians know nothing of this work and thus use the name of Jesus as a "magic word" to get their wishes. No dear brethren! Christ died and having risen from the dead, has an eternal having from the father! Does this fact warm theme heart? If not, I wonder whether you are spirit filled.

(ii). The second reason is the Eternal Intercession of Christ. We are told in the scriptures that Christ having offered atonement, he went and sat at the right hand of the father to intercede for the saints (Hebrews 8: 1; 7: 25). As soon as he was lift up to heaven from mount He went and warmed the seat at the right hand of thee father (Mark 16: 19). In this way, he will remain in all eternity as our advocate. We know that Christ's prayers are ever heard or are effectual and therefore, the prayer he makes for the weakest saint will be answered. This throws out all room for possible loss of salvation for the elect of God because

Christ intercedes for us. Remember that in this earthly ministry, the Lord prayed for Peter? () But now, He is in glory itself pleading for us ensuring that none is lost. Should we sin, we have an advocate with God, Jesus Christ (I John 2: 1; I John 5: 18; Romans 6: 1 should be born in mind) His wounds are fresh and yet visible and He shall carry them in all eternity! Ah! What a firm foundation there is for the saints! What an unshakeable joy is ours!! None can take away this fact and joy. Circumstances round us might change but Christ is immutable! He ever lives to make intercession for us. These truths, the spiritual like many, (Luke 2: 19) lay them to heart and these burn within their bones. Many a modern day "prayer warrior" doth not know anything of these intercessory prayers of Christ and thus think that they can 'twist' the arm of God. Granted that we should pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:7), I fear many think that Christ seats as our judge (as saints) rather than our merciful high priest and intercessor. Me-thinks Christ is the greatest prayer warrior because he will intercede in all eternity! On Earth, his prayer life was unmatched, what more in glory?

Armed with these two truths, the spirit filled Christian sees all the more reason why we should pray to God the father for everything in the name of Jesus Christ. It should always be remembered that not one request of Christ ever failed to be granted why? Because He knows the mind of God and thus prays according to his will! (Romans 8) Oh friends! This ought to melt even the backslidden heart! To know that Christ invites us to pray through Him. This realization will throw away all other mediators or priests! Not even the many of the papists dare stand in the way of Christ! In fact, it is blasphemy to pray through any other person rather than Christ! The spiritual are infuriated at this substitution because it suggests that:

- (I). Christ is not God or a merciful high Priest.
- (ii). Christ's prayers are not always effectual.
- (iii). Christ's prayers can be thwarted.

But this can never be! Jesus is God! And thus we should maintain this truth and rightly be filled with Holy anger when other mediators are presented. Away with other mediators! None but Christ must we pray through! Having thus laboured to point out the truths hidden in the verses 18 - 20, it only remains for me to draw out a few lessons and practical applications:

(I). Having established that being filled with wine is contrary to our new nature as Christians, it is fitting for us to draw a few life exhortations. Brethren, let us labour to be filled with the Spirit. Let us cease to lament only at our spiritual poverty or inadequacy but let us bruise the knee more frequently. Let us remember those earlier days (Hebrews 10: 32) when the placental blessings of God were fresh! What peaceful hours we once enjoyed! The Apostles also looked back at one time (Acts 15: 8). This consideration made them accept the Gentile believers thus let us also not accept our filthy state until God blesses us. We need Him more than ever before. The tide of worldliness and sin rises very high but the Holy Spirit can help us turn the world upside down (Acts). Let us pray that we may fill the world with a holy noise of Jesus. We are loud but empty, O' for showers of blessings!

(ii). Further, we should ever labour to have evitable evidence of having been filled with the spirit to speaking to one other in Psalms, hymns etc. Our conversation, which has hither to been full of other earthly matters should be full of words that are helpful, edifying and constructive (Ephesians 4: 29, Colossians

3: 8) we should aim that all our joys, talks, laughter's are Christ centric – No more coarse jokes! (Ephesians 5: 1-4). Until such a time is reached, let us rest not!! The writer recalls a period at church when almost everyone talked about Christ all the time and when one said anything outside the holy writ, they immediately felt out of place. But sadly, I fear that the opposite is true today. Most Evangelical Churches country wide once had a fine reputation of not sparing anyone who visited their premises. They diligently preached the gospel and often asked his or her testimony. Alas, all those glorious moments are buried in the sands of time. Yet, the sea water of the scriptures can uncover these sands! How? Well, by turning to the Lord in humility and seeking his face. (II Chronicles 7: 14) That is the greatest need of the hour!

(iii). Brethren, the church has been a singing church from the first century! The Lord sung a hymn, the early church sung (Philippians 2: 6 – 11) believed to have been a 1st century hymn), The church fathers sang, the Reformers sang, the Puritans sang, the Methodists and so even the present should sing! A brother in the Lord lamented once after visiting a developed country as to how they lifelessly sang! They did not sing with all their lungs! (This lively singing however should not be to seek man's praise but God!) The saints should sing with all their hearts to the praise and glory of God. I would further encourage the saints to stop a while at the crossroads and ask for the ancient paths (Jeremiah 6:16). By this I mean, we should pause amidst all the clamour, rushing, changing times, technologies etc. and meditate upon God's faith fullness. Then, a cheerful song will not fail to flow out from our hearts to the pen! Cow per catches the thought excellently when he says:-

Have you no words, ah! think again!
 Words flow apace when you fill
 your fellow creature's ear, with the sad
 tale of your care

Were half the breathe thus vainly
 spent to heaven in supplication
 sent,
 Your cheerful song would oftener be
 "Hear what the Lord
 done
 for me."

The point needs not to be over emphasized; we are in dire need of rich songs both in theme and content. We have had enough of those many meaningless choruses, which are endless and monotonous. Rather, let us intermingle the two in the most spiritual manner so that God's glory not our pleasure only results. The world, which learnt from the church to sing, is far ahead, especially so, singing to the prince of this world! Oh arise, arise. Christian brethren and fill the world with your joyful songs, write for eternity.

(iv). Knowing that all things are perfectly in order in the Divine hand, let us never allow bitter roots of unbelief in our hearts (Hebrews 3: 12; 12:15) whatever betide. Circumstances will vary from time to time but you and I can keep afloat if we tenaciously hold on to that truth of God's decree. All things – to the minutest detail are working out for our good and are in God's hands! Were they to be placed in man's hand for a moment, the entire globe would be soon full of pandemonium but thankfully, God is in control. Thus we should always give thanks to God for everything no matter the situation!

(vi) Last but not the least, we should direct all our prayers to God the father through Jesus Christ. Many of our prayers are not answered perhaps because we

do not come in the right manner or through the Lord Jesus. The World is presently threatening to "crush" the church from all angles. With the knowledge of Jesus on our side, we can defy all odds and face the morrow with our faces up and our shoulders high! Jesus has fought a more vicious battle and yet has triumphed. Then how dare we doubt his ability to guide us in the last 100 metres of the way home? The physically blind lady had more spiritual eyes and could see more clearly. She penned down the following words:

All the way my saviour leads;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in Him to dwell:
For I know what're befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well

Fanny Crosby knew very well and so may we!
Behold, ensure that you are Spirit filled before you ascend those golden stairs in glory.
Farewell and meet me in Heaven!

Amen!

General Bibliography

Baker William, Puritan Profiles: 54 influential Puritans at the time when the Westminster Confession of faith was written, Mentor, 1996

Bakker Frans, Praying always, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987

Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, with notes by Dr Peter Masters.

Bennett Richard, Howell Harris and the dawn of revival, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1987 (EPW edition)

Bridges Jerry, The Practice of Godliness, NAVPRESS, USA

Bridges Jerry, The Pursuit of Holiness, NAVPRESS, USA

Dallimore A, George Whitefield Volumes 1 & 2, The Banner of Truth Trust

Fox John, Fox's book of Martyrs: A history of the lives, sufferings and triumphant deaths of the early Christian & the Protestant Martyrs, Clarion Classics, Zondervan Publishing House (Edited by Byron Forbush DD) 1926

Gillies John, Historical collections of Revival, The Banner of Truth Trust

Hodge Charles, The way of life, The banner of Truth Trust

Houghton S, Christian Hymn writers, Evangelical Press of Wales

Houghton S, Sketches from Church History, The Banner of Truth Trust

Jeffery Peter, Christian Hand book, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1988

Jones Hywel R, Gospel & Church: An Evangelical evaluation of ecumenical documents on Church Unity, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1989

Kidner Derek, Psalms 1-72: An introduction and commentary, Intervarsity Press, 1973, London.

Loane L Marcus, Makers of Puritan History, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961

Morey A Robert, The saving work of Christ: Studies in the atonement, Graced abounding ministries, 1980

Murray IAN H, The Reformation of the Church: A collection of Reformed & Puritan documents on church issues, the Banner of Truth Trust, 1965

Pink A W, Elijah, The Banner of Truth Trust

Pollock John, The Awakener: The life and times of George Whitefield, the matchless soul winner

Prime Samuel, The Power of Prayer: The New York Revival of 1858, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991

Ryle J C, Practical religion, Evangelical Press

Ryle J C, The Upper room: Being a few truths for the times, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970 (Banner edition)

Ryle J C, Warnings to the Churches, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967

Sargent Tony, The Sacred anointing: The preaching of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Crossway books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1994

Segler M Franklin, Christian Worship: Understanding, preparing for, and practicing, 2nd edition, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996, USA

Shaw Ian, Social issues and the local church, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1988

Smeaton George, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958 (Banner edition), University Printing house, Oxford.

Spurgeon C H, The treasury of David

, The Tongue our measure

Thornbury J F, God sent Revival: The story of Asahel Nettleton and the second great awakening, Evangelical Press, 1977

Warfield B B, The Holy Spirit: Person and Work, Calvary Press, 1997, USA

Warfield B B, Faith and Life, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 (Banner edition)

Watson Thomas, A body of Divinity, The Banner of Truth Trust edition

Watson Thomas, The Lord's prayer, The Banner of Truth Trust

Whitefield George, George Whitefield's Journals, The Banner of Truth Trust

Whitefield George, George Whitefield's letters: A facsimile of

Whitefield's works volume one, 1771, with supplements Banner of Truth Trust 1976

Winslow Octavious, Personal declension and revival of Religion in the soul, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960 (Banner edition), Hazel/Watson & Viney Ltd, UK

Winslow Octavious, The work of the Holy Spirit: An experimental & practical view, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961 (Banner edition) McCorquodale (Scotland) Limited

Young E J, Thy word is Truth, The Banner of Truth Trust/William B Eerdmans publishing co., 1957

Index

A

Amalekites 32
Amen..... 6, 7, 44, 51
Apollos..... 25, 45
apostle .. 8, 11, 25, 28, 29, 33, 34, 38,
39, 40, 41, 44, 45
Apostle 8, 9, 11, 12, 29, 41, 46
Asaph 34, 35

B

Bathsheba 35
believers 13, 21, 33, 48
Berean..... 29, 30
Bible..... 12, 15, 31
Biblical..... 24, 31
BIBLINE 30
Bishop 24
blaspheming 9
Body of Divinity 16, 23
Brainerd..... 29
Brethren 48, 49

C

Cennick..... 25
Charismatic 34, 39
Charles Wesley 36, 40
Christ 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19,
20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 35,
39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49,
50, 53
Christian 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,
17, 18, 20, 24, 25, 30, 32, 33, 35,
37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 50,
52, 53
Christians. 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18,
19, 21, 25, 30, 34, 41, 42, 44, 47,
48
Christo-centric 25, 35
Church history 36
Colossians.. 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26,
39, 49
Corinthians. 11, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26,
27, 30, 33, 43, 45
corrupt heart 31
Covenant 23
crucified..... 27

D

Daniel..... 26
David..... 12, 13, 29, 34, 54
Davinci Code 24

decrees..... 23, 45
Deuteronomy..... 38
Devil..... 23, 26, 31, 33, 34, 43, 44
Divine..... 23, 50
doctrine 23, 24, 31
Doctrine..... 23, 54

E

Ecclesiastes 18, 45
edification 2, 6
environment 6
Ephesians..... 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18,
19, 22, 23, 26, 30, 32, 49
Epistle 10
Eternal..... 47
eternity..... 19, 41, 47, 50
Evangelical 49, 52, 53, 54
evangelism..... 30, 37
Ezra 30

F

Father..... 8, 22, 46
fellowship..... 20, 25
Frances Ridley Harvagel 36

G

Galatians..... 14, 18, 19, 45
God ... 3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,
18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,
27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37,
38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46,
47, 48, 49, 50, 54
Godhead 9
godliness..... 9
grace 3, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24,
25, 27, 30, 35, 36, 38, 41

H

Heaven 21, 22, 34, 40, 51
Hebrews 10, 12, 16, 20, 22, 25, 28,
35, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50
holiness 13, 20, 35
Holy .. 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 19, 25, 30, 31,
32, 37, 47, 48, 54
Holy Spirit 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 19, 37, 48,
54
Holy Trinity 9
hymns 8, 36, 37, 38, 39, 49

I

I Peter 31, 45
idolatry..... 21

immutable..... 47
 infidel9
 Intercession 47
 Isaac Watts 36
 Israelites..... 19, 32, 38

J

James 15, 27, 29, 46
 JC Ryle 17, 24
 Jehovah 35, 38
 Jeremiah 3, 14, 18, 27, 28, 33, 49
 Jericho..... 39
 Job..... 32, 41
 John Banyan..... 30
 John Calvin..... 42
 John Newton..... 36
 John Ryland..... 36
 John Wesley 21, 25, 36

L

Labour 27, 29, 30, 31, 32
 Liverpool 24
 Lord 3, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20,
 21, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37,
 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 46, 47, 49, 50,
 54
 Luke 7, 26, 28, 37, 47
 Luther..... 28, 36

M

M'Cheyne 22, 27
 Martyn Lloyd-Jones 34, 53
 masquerades 33
 Master 29, 38, 41
 Matthew..... 10, 12, 14, 18, 22, 26, 28,
 36, 43
 meditate 38, 40, 49
 Moses 13, 28, 31, 33
 Mount..... 5, 11

P

Paul. 8, 10, 13, 19, 24, 29, 31, 32, 37,
 41, 42, 43, 44, 45
 Peter ... 10, 16, 19, 21, 25, 26, 39, 43,
 47, 52, 53
 Pharaoh 33
 Philippians.... 5, 12, 13, 16, 19, 21, 25,
 36, 43, 44, 49
 Philistines..... 27, 32
 Pilgrim's progress..... 44
 Priest..... 48
 Proverbs 16, 21, 25, 26, 27

Psalms 4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 33, 34,
 35, 37
 Psalms..... 34, 35, 38, 49, 53
 Puritans 22, 34, 39, 49, 52

R

rejoice 32, 35, 42, 43, 45
 Richard Baxter 17, 42
 righteousness 22
 Romans 11, 13, 14, 19, 23, 26, 32, 42,
 47, 48

S

sacrifice 40, 42, 46
 saint.... 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28,
 30, 35, 39, 41, 43, 45, 46, 47
 saints 2, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20,
 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 33, 34,
 35, 36, 37, 39, 45, 47, 49
 salvation 16, 26, 47
 Samuel 13, 35, 53
 sanctified 11, 13
 Satan 16, 41
 scripture 11, 15, 25, 29, 35, 37
 scriptures. 1, 9, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 29,
 33, 34, 36, 45, 47, 49
 spirit.. 6, 8, 13, 20, 29, 30, 41, 43, 45,
 47, 48, 49
 Spirit ... 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19,
 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 32, 33, 34,
 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 51
 spiritual ... 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,
 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31,
 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41,
 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50
 Spurgeon 43, 54
 Synagogues of Satan..... 6

T

Theo-centric 35
 Thessalonians .. 13, 15, 18, 19, 32, 40,
 47
 Thomas Watson 16, 23
 Timothy . 9, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 36,
 43, 44
 Titus..... 9, 12, 18, 26

U

University..... 24, 26, 54

W

wealth 23
 Whitefield.... 17, 25, 43, 45, 52, 53, 54

William Cowper.....36
William Williams..... 36, 38

Z

Zambians.....9

About the Author



Billy Sichone trained as an Accountant and worked as a Program Accountant at one of World Vision Zambia's large scale Area Development Programs for seven years. He studied the Zambia Diploma in Accountancy (**ZDA**), is a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Accountants of UK and holds an MBA. In addition to other credentials, he is a ThD student at the Trinity Graduate School, India.

He is married to Jane and now works as Program Manager at a large scale World Vision Zambia program. He served as an elder and church planter at the Kambule Reformed Baptist Church, Mongu before relocating to Mpika, where he is active in church life.

Among his interests include research, art, meeting people, astronomy, farming and ranching.

www.sichone.com