

HOW TO LIVE IN THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

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Note: unless otherwise stated, this document uses the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

FOREWORD

One of the shortest verses in the Bible, though one of the most profound, is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: “Do not quench the Spirit.” So brief, and yet so far-reaching; so small, and yet so great.

If the average Christian could grasp and practice the tremendous truth wrapped up in this brief statement, he would never again be the same person. He would be literally astonished at what God would do for him and through him.

In this letter Paul is giving his first readers an extraordinary word-picture that most casual readers would pass right over. The phrasing of this verse offers a clue to a dynamic truth, and it rewards a closer look at how the underlying word is used. (The author drew this observation from the Spanish Reina-Valera, and the same point can be traced in the original Greek.)

The term translated “quench” here in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is used six other times in the original text of the New Testament.

When those other six uses are understood, it does not take much reflection to grasp the picture of what Paul wanted to say to the saints at Thessalonica. Matthew 12:20 links the expression “smoldering wick” with “quench.”

The biblical text of Mark 9:48 ties the word “quench” to “fire.” Paul exhorts the saints at Ephesus about how to “extinguish the flaming darts.” Finally, in Hebrews 11:34 the word “quench” is again linked with “fire.”

It is easy to see what these six verses have in common. “Quench” is always used together with “fire.” Paul, addressing the saints at Thessalonica, uses the term “quench” and applies it to the Spirit of God, whom he presents as a fire.

In fact, several modern translations render the sense of this verse as: “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”

Paul expresses the same thought in his letter to Timothy when he tells him: “Fan into flame the gift of God...” The word “fan into flame” is a message in itself. In the original language it carries the ideas of “again,” “life,” and “fire.”

The expression “fan into flame” literally means to kindle afresh, to keep burning. What Paul is really telling Timothy is to keep the gift of God that is in him continually burning.

By using these two verses, Paul is painting a tremendous word-picture of the Holy Spirit. He sees the Spirit as a “fire” of God. By portraying the Spirit as “fire,” he is revealing tremendous truths. Fire speaks of power, since some form of fire is used in nearly every means of energy.

The Holy Spirit is the fire, or the power, of God. Fire speaks of light, for it gives illumination to man so that he can see in the night. The Spirit of God is the fire, the illuminating force of God. It speaks of warmth, since fire is used to drive away the cold. He is the fire, the warmth of God.

Fire even speaks of destruction, for fire in some of its forms is used in nearly every weapon of war. The Holy Spirit is the purifying fire of God.

When the Holy Spirit — the “fire” of God — is at work in our lives, He brings warmth, light, purity, power, and even destruction for sin and sickness. The Church of God needs the fire of God to warm our hearts with His love, to illuminate our minds concerning His will, to energize our wills toward carrying out His commandments, and to burn sin and sickness out of our lives.

Paul is saying that the Church needs the fire of God burning within her heart. It is time to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it has ever been before. The cry of the hour must be: “Let it burn, let it burn, let it burn!” We need to know how to live in the fullness of the Spirit.

INTRODUCTION: THE HOLY SPIRIT

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever” (John 14:16).

The Word of God strikingly proclaims the existence of the Holy Trinity — the Godhead, or the union of three persons in one essence. One God who makes Himself known in three persons, which simply means: the Father, who has existed for all eternity; the Son, who has existed for all eternity; and the Holy Spirit, who has existed for all eternity.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each equally possessing all the perfections of the Godhead, make up the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is to be worshiped, praised, loved, and obeyed in the very same way as the Father and the Son. When speaking about the Holy Spirit, a person must exercise great care, for it is like walking on the most sacred and precious ground. The Holy Spirit is God.

He must never be regarded as a mere blessing, a sensation (a feeling), or an influence. He is a real Person! Jesus declared in John 14:16: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.”

Just as Jesus had been real among His disciples — whom they heard speak with their ears, saw with their eyes, and touched with their hands — in the same way the “other Helper,” the Holy Spirit, was to take His place among them. Though an invisible Person, He would be very real as companion, friend, teacher, and guide, both to those first disciples of Jesus and to all who accept His gospel.

What an exciting adventure to be alive in the Church in this “age of the Spirit”! The Church today is beginning to experience the reality of what the early Church knew and lived.

In our day a dynamic movement of the Holy Spirit is taking place that can only be described as a revival of the vitality of the first-century Church. The early Church was full of the Spirit.

If anything stood out in the life of the first Church, it was the simple fact that the Holy Spirit was actively at work in the lives of its members.

The key to the triumph of the Church in the first century was the complete operation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was active and alive in the daily life of the members.

Following the history of the early Church through the book of Acts, it is truly astonishing to see the operation of the Spirit in its life. Acts, covering nearly thirty years of historical record, registers thirty-six distinctly divine interventions through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the New Testament Church.

Miracles such as these: Peter's shadow bringing healing; Philip being transported by the Spirit from one place to another; Tabitha raised from the dead; healings; the casting out of demons; and even a "reverse miracle," when Elymas, who was causing some trouble, was struck blind. The book of Acts reveals again and again how, over that thirty-year period, God intervened through His Spirit thirty-six different times.

In addition to the thirty-six divine interventions, the record shows how the early Church received much of its inspiration and instruction. The book of Acts tells us there were six clearly defined visions witnessed by the members of the Church.

Add to these five additional experiences which, although they were not labeled as visions, would certainly be called so today; so there is a total of eleven manifestations that gave renewed inspiration, enthusiasm, and understanding from Almighty God. Visions such as these: those of Cornelius and Peter, those of Paul and Ananias, and Philip's experience with an angel. The Spirit was working powerfully in the early Church.

If that is not enough to convince the skeptic, the leadership and members of the early Church heard, in an audible voice, the voice of an angel or of Jesus on approximately fourteen different occasions.

Adding to this, the book of Acts records on seven different occasions that signs and wonders were performed through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In short, the early Church lived and functioned in the Spirit. They were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Is this not the need of the hour today — for men and women so filled with the Holy Spirit that the direct inspiration of God becomes the guiding principle in the life of every local church? Oh, if only we could be so filled with the Spirit that visions, angels, and the voice of God would give the direction needed at every crossroads!

Even above visions, angels, and voices, the primary desire of every child of God should be to receive the illumination of the Word of God through the Spirit, so that

each one may know His will for his life. Is this not the need of the hour — the cry: “Fill us, Lord, fill us, Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit and power”?

Most Christians recognize the tremendous challenge of being filled with the Spirit; nevertheless, very few actually know “how” to become filled with the Spirit. There are four important steps that every believer in Christ must take if he wishes to live in the fullness of the Spirit.

Let us begin this exciting adventure of arriving at the reality of living in the fullness of the Spirit. Follow these four steps and you will never be the same person. Step number one is: Being Born of the Spirit.

We read about Him throughout the Bible, here are some of the basic scriptures:

1. The Holy Spirit Is God: 1 Corinthians 2:10–12, Genesis 1:1.
2. The Holy Spirit Is a Person of the Trinity. In John chapters 14–16 we have Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit is a person. Jesus calls him "another Counselor" (Comforter) in 14:16. In John 14:17, Jesus tells us that "You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." In John 14:26 Jesus tells us "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things."
3. He baptizes people for His service and is a gift from God: Acts 2:38.
4. He empowers the believers: Judges 3:10-14, Judges 14:6-8.
5. He speaks to us today: Acts 13:2.
6. He reveals the will of God and the deep things of God: 1 Corinthians 2:10–11.
7. The Apostle Paul commands us to be filled with the Spirit and not grieve the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 5:18, Ephesians 4:30.
8. He gives us the Gifts of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4.
9. He gives us liberty to love and serve God: 2 Corinthians 3:17–18.
10. Our bodies are the temple of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 3:16.

STEP ONE: BEING BORN OF THE SPIRIT

A missionary, who was also trained in medicine, was traveling through the Appalachian Mountains when he came to the home of a family that lived in those parts. After visiting with them for a while, the missionary calmly remarked: “Sir, may I recommend that you buy a bathtub for your family? It seems you need one.”

“No o o..., we don’t need one,” the father answered. “We already have one; it’s over there. My grandpa was killed in it.”

“A bathtub killed your grandfather? How did such a thing happen?”

“Well, Pastor, you see, it’s a mighty fine-looking tub, and we set it on the front porch, right where it is now; we filled it with water and we all started to bathe. First, Mama bathed; then the oldest daughter took her turn, then the youngest daughter, then the oldest son and the middle one. Then Grandma bathed, the two twins, Uncle Pedro, and then me.

Finally, after Mama, the oldest daughter, the youngest daughter, the oldest son, the middle son, Grandma, the twins, Uncle Pedro, and me, it came Grandpa’s turn to bathe. Being the last one was what killed him! When he climbed into the tub, he sank clear out of sight into the quicksand! From the moment he got into the tub, he disappeared, and we haven’t seen him since!”

The desire of every born-again believer should be to descend into the lowest depths of the Spirit until he “disappears” completely from view, never to be seen by the world again. The only thing the world should see of such a believer is the Holy Spirit working in and through his life. That is truly living in the fullness of the Spirit!

In the illustration above, before the grandfather disappeared from everyone’s sight, he first had to get into the tub. Step one is being born of the Spirit, which is essential to lead us toward how to be sanctified and filled with the Spirit.

First we must be born again, or become new creatures in Christ, and then be cleansed of our innate sinful nature; once this takes place in our lives, we will be ready to receive the fullness of the Spirit. The foundation is to receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and immediately the miracle of the new birth by the Holy Spirit takes place.

This process of being born of the Spirit, of being sanctified by the Spirit, and of being filled with the Spirit is a prominent truth in the Word of God. It is a truth that has

divided many Christians, but one that can be easily understood if the Word of God is given the opportunity to speak for itself.

It declares that, in one sense, every born-again believer has the presence of the Spirit of God within him. Paul says in Romans 8:9: "...Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." This verse simply means that if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ within his heart, he is not a child of God.

Paul says — or the Holy Spirit speaking through him — in Galatians 4:6–7: "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts...." This is a simple declaration — that "the Spirit of his Son" comes to dwell in the heart of the newly converted. Paul states again in Romans 8:15–16: "...you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.... The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." These verses simply mean that a person newly converted to Christianity has received the Spirit of adoption.

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The real question is: "Do the Spirit of His Son (Galatians 4:6–7), the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9), the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), and the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15) refer to the same person of the Trinity?"

The answer is an emphatic yes! All these titles actually refer to the Holy Spirit, since Paul says in Ephesians 4:4 that there is only one Spirit, who is the third person of the Trinity.

The Word of God speaks very clearly concerning the experience of regeneration. At the moment of the new birth, when a person is converted, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit, comes to dwell within the believer — but that is not the actual baptism with the Holy Spirit.

What happens in the instant of conversion should not be confused with what occurs when the believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The fourth chapter of Galatians declares: "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts...." The eighth chapter of Romans declares: "...you have received the Spirit of adoption..." and "the Spirit of God dwells in you." These specific titles (Spirit of His Son, Spirit of adoption, and Spirit of God) merely call attention to certain functions or

attributes that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, manifests on different occasions.

It is like calling Jesus Christ prophet, priest, and king. There are not three different persons, but one person, Jesus Christ, who manifests Himself as Prophet, Priest, and King. There is only one Holy Spirit, but at times He manifests Himself as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of His Son, or the Spirit of adoption.

The Holy Spirit performs many different functions, but there is only one Spirit. In fact, everything received from God comes through the Holy Spirit. The total experience of salvation is the will of the Father through the Son by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent by whom man receives all things from God.

“Thanks be to God” for the glorious ministry of the Holy Spirit! He is the one who produces conviction in the heart of the unconverted and calls him. He implants the new nature of regeneration in the newborn. The Holy Spirit adopts man in such a way that he can cry out: “Abba, Father.”

He is the one who sanctifies him through the blood of Jesus. He brings conviction, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, revelation, and direction; He is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is God! — God, the Holy Spirit, begins His work in a person when he receives conviction and repents of his sins, and receives the new birth in Christ.

It must be understood that all Christians have the Spirit of God in a certain measure at conversion, or else they would not be Christians. Of course, the Church of God stated as much for the Assembly of 1916. A certain question came before the platform of that Assembly, and the following answer was quite striking: “When a man is converted, his life is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”

Paul declared in this regard: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” The statement continued: “There is a sense in which the Holy Spirit illuminates and bears witness to a person, even though he has not yet been baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Then a tremendous statement of inspiration and foresight was made: “This (the statement above) was illustrated by an incident showing that the Spirit operated in and through persons who were not yet baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

This work of the Holy Spirit that makes men become children of God should not be confused with the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Although all believers have the Holy Spirit “dwelling” in their hearts, they have not yet been baptized with the actual experience of the Spirit of God.

This experience is different from that of regeneration and that of sanctification. The Word of God declares specifically that in the initial work of regeneration in the believer, the Spirit of God enters to reside in his heart. Nevertheless, the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire is a definite experience (explained in step three), subsequent to salvation, and is accompanied by the presence of speaking in other tongues.

The fourth chapter of Acts reveals a perfect example of the two experiences. In this chapter, it is recorded where there were believers who were persecuted for the love of Christ. Then it says that those persecuted were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been regenerated and afterward persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit descended upon them and filled them. The eighth chapter of Acts tells us of another example of people who had already been converted and then received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Samaria, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who had received Christ through the preaching of Philip, and who had already been baptized in water.

In Ephesus (chapter 19 of Acts), the Holy Spirit fell upon those whom Paul considered worthy of being baptized in water, thereby indicating that they had already been converted. In each of the incidents mentioned above, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon those who had already been born again in Christ and who had probably already been sanctified.

In fact, every time the baptism of the Holy Spirit is promised in the New Testament, it is always promised to believers. Justification is promised to the unjust. Regeneration is promised to the unregenerate. Repentance is promised to the impenitent. These are announcements given to the world, but the baptism with the Holy Spirit is always promised to obedient believers.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the world, nor for unbelievers, but for believers. If you have been born again and are sanctified, God has promised you the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Because of the great truth that such a baptism has been promised to believers only, it is a necessity that you pass through step number one — the new birth of the Spirit — in order to be filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is vital that you accept Jesus Christ first as your personal Savior and believe by faith that you have been born again.

This miraculous new birth is the will of the Father through the Son and carried out by the Holy Spirit. It is a birth of the Spirit. He is the agent that applies to your life the

blood that the Son shed on the cross, and in this way the demand of the Father is satisfied.

What a thrilling adventure it is to live in the fullness of the Spirit of God! God desires to dwell in you fully. He wants to produce in your life the fullness of His personality.

God desires not only to give you the power to do His will, but also to give you the desire to do His will. God wants to baptize you with the fullness of His Being.

If you have been born again through the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, you are now ready for step two — how to live in the fullness of the Spirit — sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

STEP TWO: BEING SANCTIFIED BY THE SPIRIT

One of the most exciting steps in experiencing and learning how to live in the fullness of the Spirit is being sanctified by the Spirit of God. Just as being born of the Spirit is a prerequisite to the reality of living in the fullness of the Spirit, the experience of sanctification is also a necessity.

In fact, without sanctification by the Spirit, the steps of being baptized in the Spirit and being developed in the Spirit are impossible. Unless the believer is sanctified by the Spirit, he cannot grow toward spiritual maturity; he cannot experience the reality of living in the fullness of the Spirit. The realization of learning the process of living in the fullness of the Spirit is an exciting adventure.

Regeneration is brought about by an act of God through the Word and the Spirit, by which the seed of the new life is implanted in the believer. He has been born of the Spirit through the Word. The new birth is a definite and instantaneous experience.

After the individual repents of his sins and expresses faith in Jesus Christ, he comes to the joyful understanding that his sins have been forgiven and that his entire intellectual, emotional, and volitional frame of reference has been recreated. It is then that he has been born of the Spirit.

When the believer accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, his inner man is regenerated, and the Spirit of God bears witness with the spirit of man that he is in reality a new creature. The Holy Spirit does not bear witness in the sense of telling what He has seen or heard, but in the sense of joining with the human spirit to confirm that testimony.

When the believer becomes a new creature in Christ, his spirit (not his soul or body) is regenerated, restored to life, and the Holy Spirit enters the inner man to bear witness with the spirit of man (they bear witness together) that the person is in reality a new creature in Christ. The newly converted has begun his new life in the Spirit. What a thrill to be able to experience the new birth of the Spirit!

However, if the newly converted does not continue receiving what he needs from God, he will find himself caught up in very difficult situations. His soul is being fed with the information that his newly regenerated and newborn spirit receives from the things of God; his soul is also fed with the information that the body receives from the things of the world.

So, he finds himself in the same predicament that Paul described when he said: "...For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." The soul, which is nothing other than the faculty of man for making decisions, is left in a dilemma or state of uncertainty.

The only answer for a believer to escape such a predicament is the Holy Spirit. The body (the carnal impulses) must die. This is done when the believer experiences the second step toward life in the fullness of the Spirit. Paul declares that the believer is "sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

The believer must not only be born of the Spirit, but also be sanctified by the Spirit. The inner man has been regenerated (in his spirit), the carnal impulses have been crucified (body), and the mental processes (the soul) must be controlled. This is accomplished by means of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (step three).

Certainly the life of the believer is a life in the Holy Spirit. He is born of the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and baptized with the Spirit in order to grow or develop in the Spirit.

Before the believer can move from step one toward the reality of living in the fullness of the Spirit, he must be sanctified by the Spirit. Although the new birth of the Spirit transforms man, it does not heal him of all his afflictions. Man is tormented by a double sin problem: his personal transgression and his corrupt condition.

The total redemption of man must be the answer to both sinful conditions of this sin problem. The Word of God proclaims: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The forgiveness of the believer's sins corresponds to the gracious act of justification, which is a vital part of the process of having been born of the Spirit; while being sanctified by the Spirit relates to the purification of the believer from all contamination.

Being sanctified by the Spirit is an act subsequent to the new birth of the Spirit and is substantiated by the blood of the sacrifice of Christ. It is a gift of divine grace through which the crucifixion of the body of sin is effected, along with the purification of the heart from all injustice or impurity, freeing the believer from the law of sin and death. For the first time the believer finds himself free to do what he desires. He has been freed from the law of sin and death, and sanctified by the Spirit.

Someone has said that if an individual pictures Christ dying on the cross for sin, that is salvation; however, if that person sees himself dying outside the cross, that is sanctification. In essence, sanctification is the death of the person with Christ on the cross.

Paul declared: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?... We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” Sanctification is death to, or separation from, sin.

Paul gives us a revealing explanation of his experience when he was sanctified by the Spirit in chapters 6–8 of Romans. He declares in chapter six: “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.”

Then in verses 22 and 23 he says: “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In chapter seven, Paul gives additional insight into sanctification when he proclaims: “For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code... I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

Paul adds further in Romans 7:19–25: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

In chapter eight (1–6), Paul reveals:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

The key to understanding chapters six and eight of Romans lies in verse nine of chapter seven: “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

The only time that Paul — a Jew raised by very devout Jewish parents — could have been alive apart from the law was during that time before the age at which one must give account to God.

He was alive and the law existed, but he was as though without “law.” Sin came alive for him at the age at which one gives account to God for sins, and he died spiritually.

He placed himself under the law, which set him in a position of constant struggle. Although he would become a Pharisee of Pharisees, a teacher of the law, he would still cry out concerning this inner battle:

“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (19–24).

Paul cries out, as if in constant torment with himself: “...with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.” As a Jew, living under the law, he

found himself in great inner conflict. In his inner being, he delighted in the law of God, but the flesh drove him to do what he did not want.

There was no death for carnality (the mistaken carnal impulses) under the law, for the blood of animals could not stop sin. The rite of an imperfect sacrifice could not stop Satan. It is no wonder, then, to hear Paul exclaim: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me...?”

Then he goes on to say, rejoicing as he takes a fresh breath: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

But after he was sanctified by the Spirit, Paul could declare: “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”

The atoning blood of Christ cleanses all injustice from the heart of the believer because “the law of the Spirit of life” in Christ Jesus has set him “free from the law of sin and death.”

After a person is regenerated and receives new life in Christ, the “old man” must die, or be crucified. The death of the old nature through sanctification and by the Spirit frees the believer from innate sin (the sinful nature he inherited from Adam), thereby destroying the body of sin.

By then he is free from the slavery of Satan and free from the chains of sin. He is free from the law of sin and death. He has been set free to live!

He is now ready to continue living that exciting adventure in the fullness of the Spirit. He has already been born of the Spirit, who implanted His new life within him. He has already been sanctified and freed from the Adamic nature. Now his new life must be totally controlled by the Spirit.

His spirit was regenerated, his “body” crucified, and his soul must be controlled. He is now ready to take the third step, to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

STEP THREE: BEING BAPTIZED WITH THE SPIRIT

The believer receives new life at the cross. "...the old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The believer becomes a new creature in Christ. Life begins at the cross!

On the day of Pentecost, power descended upon the believer: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). Service begins at Pentecost because the believer receives what is necessary to enable him to carry out the will of God.

The Word of God speaks clearly about the fact that no one can be converted without the operation of the Holy Spirit, and that He comes to dwell in the heart of the believer when Christ saves him.

The Word of God also speaks clearly about the fact that the receiving of the baptism of the Spirit is a real action that takes place after the believer is saved and sanctified; such a baptism with the fire of the power of God confers upon the Christian power to serve and to walk in the new life.

This baptism in the Spirit is a fuller and more intimate relationship with the Spirit than the believer has ever enjoyed up to the present. The eighth chapter of Acts tells of a group of people who had been enjoying the experience of salvation, but without having received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

When the apostles in Jerusalem received word that the Samaritans had received the message of salvation, but not the experience of the Holy Spirit under the ministry of Philip, they sent Peter and John to pray for them so that the Holy Spirit might come upon their lives. The new converts of Samaria experienced the joy of saving grace.

They had received the new life, but not the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. They needed that richer, fuller, and more vitalizing interrelation of the power of the Spirit. They needed to be baptized with the fire of the Spirit.

Verse sixteen of the eighth chapter of Acts is an extraordinary statement that sets forth a tremendous key to understanding the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Luke recorded, under His inspiration, the following statement: (Speaking of the Holy Spirit in verse 15) "he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Simply stated, they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but not baptized with the Holy Spirit. This verse implies that there is more than one kind of baptism: a baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus in verse 16, and a baptism in the Holy Spirit in verses 15 and 17.

In fact, after a careful study of the New Testament, it will be discovered that there are not only two kinds of baptisms, but that there are actually three baptisms recorded in the early Church. The casual reader of the New Testament often overlooks the tremendous truth of the Word of God in these three baptisms.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit becomes clearer when we examine how “baptism” is used in the New Testament. Luke 3:16 reveals two kinds of baptisms: the baptism in water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 3:27 establishes the third baptism: baptism into Jesus. These three baptisms reveal great truths concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

By referring to the baptism in water, which is the most familiar to most believers, we can gain insight into the other two baptisms. In water baptism, the minister representing the Church takes the newborn believer and immerses him completely in the water as a public testimony before the world that he is a new creature in Christ and that he has already confessed Him in his heart.

The baptizer is the credentialed minister of the Church. The element into which the believer is immersed is the water. Of course, the newly born believer in Christ is the candidate for baptism.

This baptism illustrates the truth of Galatians 3:27, where Paul said: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Who is the baptizer? What is the baptizing element, or the substance into which the person is immersed?

Who is the person being baptized? The principles of water baptism teach the truths of the baptism into Christ. The element used for baptizing is relatively simple to understand, since Paul says “baptized into Christ.”

The baptizing element of salvation is, without doubt, Christ. It is into Christ that the believer is immersed when he becomes a new creature. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Therefore, Christ is the baptizing element in the experience of salvation.

Who is the baptizer, if Christ is the element into which one is baptized? As has already been emphasized, everything we receive from God comes through Jesus Christ by the

channel of the Spirit. The total experience of salvation is the will of the Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit.

He is the agent by whom the believer receives every blessing from the Father. So, the Holy Spirit is the agent who baptizes the believer in the baptism into Christ. Just as happens in water baptism, when the minister immerses the believer in the water and brings him back out to present him to the world as one who died to sin, was buried, and rose to new life in Christ, the same thing happens when a person is converted to Christianity for the first time.

The Holy Spirit takes the sinner and leads him directly to Jesus Christ; then He brings him back out as a new creature. In those moments he was baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The truths of water baptism and baptism into Christ now reveal the principles of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is a tremendous difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and the role of the Spirit in the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

In conversion, it is the Holy Spirit who acts as the baptizing agent of the believer, baptizing him into Christ, who is the baptizing element. In the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, there is a major difference. The baptizing element — that into which the individual is baptized — is the Spirit, while the baptizing agent, or the one who baptizes, is Jesus Christ Himself.

John reveals this great truth in Luke 3:16. John was asked whether he was the Christ. He answered: "...I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Praise be to God!

After being regenerated and sanctified, Jesus Christ Himself takes the believer and immerses him in the depths of the Spirit so that he may be baptized with power. What glorious news! God desires not only to save our souls in regeneration and sanctification, but also to grant us power to live victorious Christian lives.

What does the word "baptize" really mean when John said that Jesus "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"? The term "baptize" or "baptism" in the first century literally meant "to immerse, to baptize by immersion."

To be baptized with the Holy Spirit means to be placed under, to be infiltrated (penetrated, saturated) from top to bottom by the Holy Spirit. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit is total submission to Him.

The reason believers should receive the baptism in the Spirit is simply because of what He will do in their lives. He desires the data received not only from the body, but also from the spirit of man.

The soul of man consists of his intellect, his emotions, and his will — the “total” structure of his mind. The spirit of man, the “Pneuma,” is that part of man that has contact with God.

The spiritual data of the spiritual world are supplied to the soul in the same way that physical data are supplied to the soul. Again, any separation of man into his three parts is an oversimplification, since man is an extraordinary unity. Nevertheless, this separation or division serves as an illustration to teach the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

When a person is regenerated, he becomes a new creature in Christ — newly born of the Spirit. The inner man is regenerated, and the Spirit of God bears witness with his spirit that he is indeed a new creature. The translation of the term “bear witness” in Romans 8:14–16 is a message in itself.

Paul says that when one becomes a child of God: “...the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

The original word translated here as “bear witness” does not mean the same as the word translated “witness,” as in the Scripture that says: “Any charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” This term — witness — is the usual word for one who can testify to what he has seen or heard. The expression “bear witness with” as it appears in Romans 8:16 implies much more. It means “to bear witness together with, to bear witness jointly.”

When a person is born again, his spirit (not his soul or body) is regenerated, restored to life, and the Holy Spirit enters the inner man and testifies with the spirit of man (both bear witness jointly) that he is a new creature in Christ.

The Spirit of God dwells in the inner man (the spirit of man) when he is born again. The newly converted has begun his new life in the Spirit.

Nevertheless, if the believer does not continue receiving what he needs from God, he will find himself caught up in very difficult situations. His soul receives information or data from his regenerated or reborn spirit on behalf of God, but his soul is also fed from the things of the world through his physical body.

Then he finds himself in the same predicament that Paul described when he said: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” The soul, the faculty of man that allows him to make decisions, is left in a dilemma.

The only answer for a believer in such a predicament is the Holy Spirit. The body (the carnal impulses) must be crucified with Christ. This is carried out by the Holy Spirit when the believer, as Paul says, is “sanctified” by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16).

The soul (the mental process) must be controlled. This is accomplished through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is true that the life of the believer is a life in the Holy Spirit. He has been regenerated and sanctified “by” Him, walking out that life “in” and “through” the same Spirit.

Jesus said: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” Read the words of Jesus carefully and you can see exactly what happens in the baptism of the Spirit. “Whoever believes in me (a person who has been born again), as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

Jesus is saying that out of the inner man of the believer would flow rivers of living water. What is that “living water” that will flow from within the believer? John tells us: “Now this he said about the Spirit.”

When the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, “out of his heart,” out of the innermost part of his being, rivers of the Spirit will gush forth to saturate every aspect of his inner being — the spirit, soul, and body.

The Spirit will no longer merely bear witness with the spirit of man, but will have total control of the believer. What it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be totally possessed (in spirit, soul, and body) by that Spirit.

How can a person be baptized with the Spirit? Step one: He must be born of the Spirit. The person must be regenerated to the new life. He must leave the world of those who are dying and enter the world of those who live. This can become a reality through the new birth.

The sinner must accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and believe by faith that the miracle of regeneration has occurred within his inner being. The Holy Spirit is the agent who applies the blood of the crucified Christ to the believer.

Salvation is the will of the Father through His Son and the Holy Spirit. This great truth is the reality of having been born of the Spirit.

Step two: In order to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, the believer must first be sanctified. The believer is regenerated to the new life through the Spirit, but he will have to be freed from the innate sinful carnal impulses in order to live in the liberty that is enjoyed in a full salvation.

Sanctification frees the believer from the corrupt condition through the crucifixion of the “old man” so that the body of sin may be destroyed. The believer in such a state has the free choice and power to live in the fullness of the Spirit.

Step three: One is filled with the Spirit when the believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire. There is an experience subsequent to regeneration and sanctification that saturates the believer with the fullness of the power of God.

This initial baptism in the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the evidence of speaking in other tongues (why God chose this evidence will be discussed in the fourth step). The believer, after the baptism in the Spirit, is now under the total control of the Spirit.

He is totally possessed by the Spirit, which flows out from his inner being to saturate every part of both his body and his soul. By being baptized with the Holy Spirit, the believer comes to be ready for the total control of the Spirit.

After step one, “Being Born of the Spirit,” step two, “Being Sanctified by the Spirit,” and step three, “Being Baptized with the Spirit,” the believer is now ready for the fourth step: “Being Developed Through the Spirit.”

Nevertheless, steps one, two, and three have no importance at all without step number four. Living in the fullness of the Spirit requires the participation of all four steps; it is the only way to live a life in the Spirit.

STEP FOUR: BEING DEVELOPED THROUGH THE SPIRIT

A great many people never really understand the difference between their “position” in the Lord and their “state” (condition) in the Lord. Such a misunderstanding is the cause of great confusion among many believers.

For them, it is difficult to see how a believer can be “perfect” but not “perfected,” “sanctified” but “spiritually immature.”

For many, it is a maze of perplexity how a believer’s position before the Lord is stable, while his “state” or condition is one of continual movement.

In order to understand this truth, we must take a giant step forward in the knowledge of what it means to be developed, or to grow, through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, by using the expression “You must be born again” in John 3:7, referring to the experience of salvation, gives us a remarkable key to understanding our development through the Spirit. He uses this expression to show that the relationship between Christ and the believer is like the interaction between a father and a child. There are two kinds of births: the physical or natural, and that of the spirit, or spiritual.

At the moment a child is born, his position in the family is established, and it does not change. He is as much a member of the family as any other who was born before him.

His legal rights regarding his parents are as complete as they will ever be. His right of inheritance is by birth, and not by his age or development. It is by birth that he becomes a legal member of that family, once and for all.

At the moment a child is born, his position in the family is established and cannot change; nevertheless, the developmental state of that child is entirely different from his position.

His state or condition changes every day, growing continually until he reaches adulthood. While this development is taking place, his position in the family never changes by even a hair’s breadth.

This is also true in the family of God. The position of the believer in Christ is settled and, in a sense, “perfect,” for he can never become more or less a child of God (one must use wisdom in applying this illustration — see the note below).

After conversion, the believer becomes a child of God, and he cannot become more or less a child of God than he is at the moment of the new birth.

Just as a six-month-old child is as much a member of the family as a sixty-year-old grandfather, the newly born Christian is as much a member of the family of God as the spiritually mature Christian of many years' experience.

It should be made clear that this is only an illustration to shed light on our understanding of the believer's state and position in Christ. Care must be taken to avoid falling into the trap of arguing over an illustration rather than standing firm on the Word of God (as is often the case when someone tries to teach that "once in grace, always in grace").

The point of this illustration is simply that, just as a child is born into a family in the world, of which he is a member, in the same way he must grow or develop within it. The illustration is used merely to indicate that there is a difference between the child's position and his state of growth (development).

The natural birth of a child, when handled properly, serves as an excellent teaching example to illuminate our understanding of how one must be developed through the Holy Spirit. At the moment of conception, when the male sperm fertilizes the female egg, that union forms a new life.

In the same way it happens in spiritual birth. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior, a new creature in Christ is formed. In regeneration, the believer is made a new creature in Christ.

After conception comes the birth of the child. When he is first born into the world, the umbilical cord is cut and tied. So it is with the experience of sanctification.

After the experience of sanctification, the believer has, for the first time, the freedom to choose the decisions he will make without the corruption of the Adamic nature. Now he is ready to begin his development toward spiritual maturity.

The growth of a natural child toward maturity cannot occur without the help of a mother or a mother-figure example. In fact, the child would die if abandoned after birth.

In the same way, the newly born Christian must receive help if he is going to grow toward spiritual maturity. This help is offered, of course, by the Holy Spirit.

After birth, subsequent to the experience of salvation, the believer is now ready to begin his advance toward spiritual maturity. It can truly be said that the reason a person receives conviction of his sins is so that he may repent. The reason he repents is to be justified. He is justified by God in order to be sanctified; he is sanctified in order to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

He is baptized with the Holy Spirit in order to grow toward spiritual maturity. The process from conviction to maturity is the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer was born to be filled with the Spirit, so that he may grow to the point he is meant to reach.

Satan is no one's fool. If he cannot prevent a person from accepting Christ, then he will do everything in his power to keep the believer from achieving the next step toward a life of power and usefulness. Satan will buffet the believer at every step in order to keep him in the state of a child. He does not want Christians to grow toward spiritual maturity.

One of the most profound truths the Apostle Paul uses to enlighten the believers of the Bible is the one found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and 2 Timothy 1:6. Paul tells Timothy to keep the gift of God burning in him, and to the Thessalonians he says: "Do not quench the Spirit."

He is implying that there is much more to the baptism of the Spirit than the mere initial experience of speaking in new tongues. In fact, he is declaring that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not a mere experience, but rather a way of life.

"Do not quench the Spirit" means much more than merely putting a damper on a good service. "Fan into flame the gift" means much more than merely trying to have a revival of the Holy Spirit in a local church.

Paul is simply emphasizing that the believer must not quench the Spirit in his daily life. The life of the believer must be lived in the Spirit, in such a way that the Spirit is constantly burning every day of his daily living.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not only an initial experience, but also a continual walk or development. It is a way of life.

Paul adds additional insights to this great truth in his letter to the saints at Ephesus. Paul said: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:15–18). What does it really mean to be filled with the Spirit?

Paul uses an extraordinary contrast between wine and the Spirit to illustrate exactly what he means by the expression of being filled with the Spirit.

A man under the intoxicating influence of wine is held captive by the effects of that drink. He becomes a slave of the wine. He actually does what that habit dictates. He is willing to sacrifice everything in his life in order to satisfy the desire to drink wine.

In the same way it happens with one who continually enjoys the fullness of the Spirit and lets himself be controlled by the Spirit of God. He becomes a slave of the Spirit and does everything He commands. He is ready to sacrifice everything in his life for the desires of the Spirit.

In reality, what Paul is declaring here is that, in a real sense, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not only an initial experience, but must be a perpetual operation.

Being filled with the Spirit is a normal spiritual condition of the believer. Again, being filled with the Spirit is not an experience received only once; it is a way of life.

There is another passage of the Bible that emphasizes this truth. According to the thirteenth chapter of Acts, Paul and Barnabas carried the gospel to Antioch of Pisidia. When the two missionaries were driven out of that city, the converts they left behind were filled with the Spirit. Verse 52 declares: "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

A more literal translation of that verse reads: "The disciples were being filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." The phrase "were being filled" indicates not simply something that happened in the past, but a continuous action in past time.

What does that really mean? That the disciples had already received the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. They had already received the initial experience. This statement is a proclamation of something far more than that. The account reveals that a continual flow of the Spirit was taking place. They were being constantly saturated with joy and with the Spirit.

The same idea is seen in Paul's statements to the saints at Ephesus. Paul was actually telling them to make a habit of being filled with the Spirit. He is not suggesting that the believers were not baptized with the Spirit, or that they were not new creatures. He does not imply that they had not received the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit.

What Paul is saying is simply that, although they had been born again and had once been baptized with the Spirit, he now saw in them no submission to that Spirit, no

openness to His direction, no yielding to His will. They were not bending their lives to the Spirit as a slave who yields his life to his master.

Paul's cry was for them to be filled with the Spirit like the man who is intoxicated with wine. To be totally subordinate to the Spirit; to be enslaved by the Spirit; to be filled with the Spirit.

The theme of total submission to the Spirit is one that runs throughout the entire New Testament. The matter of total subordination to the Holy Spirit can be read again and again.

For example: it is no coincidence that the evidence of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in "tongues" as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6).

James reveals that the tongue is the most difficult member to control in the body. In fact, James says that no man can control his tongue (James 3:2, 5, 6, 8). It is a simple fact, according to the Word of God, that if the tongue can be controlled, then the whole body can be controlled as well.

When the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ, he begins to speak in a "heavenly tongue," in a language controlled by the Spirit, speaking what He desires to be said. When the Spirit has taken control of the believer's tongue — praise be to God — He has control of the whole body.

When the most undisciplined member of the body is under the control of the Spirit, the rest of the personality — the body, the soul, and the spirit — is also controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Is it any wonder, then, that Peter said this baptism in the Holy Spirit is only for those who obey Jesus? The initial saturation of the baptism will not come until there is a total surrender to Jesus Christ.

Unless there is a continuation of that surrender, or total consecration, to Christ, the believer will not remain "filled" or "saturated" with the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit, the act of being filled with the Spirit, is only for those who obey and will continue to obey Christ.

The secret of growing or developing in the Spirit lies in the fact that the believer must understand that he has to submit his life to the control of the Spirit. He must be willing to obey Jesus Christ in every aspect of his life.

This truth can be easily seen by analyzing the meaning of the phrase “be filled with the Spirit.” (The author drew this point from the rendering of the original Greek in the Spanish Reina-Valera.)

What does it really mean to be “filled with the Holy Spirit”? The terminology “filled” with the Holy Spirit appears many times in the New Testament. When we understand what it really means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, it sheds great light on how to grow or develop in the Spirit.

The first word of the original language is found in Luke 4:1, and is also used in five other places in the New Testament. This word, which has been translated as “filled,” really means to be completely saturated with the Spirit in the sense that He possesses or controls us totally. So the expression “full of the Holy Spirit” in Luke 4:1 refers to His control over Jesus, who was led by the Spirit.

The second word of the original language translated as “filled” is found in Acts 2:4 and also in six additional places in the New Testament. The original word really means “the possession of the mind and heart of the believer by the Spirit.”

In other words, whatever takes complete possession of the mind and heart is that which fills it. Such possession implies the control of the Spirit over the mind and heart. So the word “filled” here in these verses refers to the control that the Spirit exercises over the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

The third word of the original language translated as “filled” is the one found in Ephesians 5:18 and in some other place in the New Testament. The original here means “to saturate or take possession of.” This implies that the Spirit possesses or controls the soul (the intellect, the emotions, and the will) of the believer. So the Holy Spirit possesses or controls the believer who is said to be filled with Him.

Many believers filled with the Spirit have done their understanding an injustice by thinking that the act by which the Holy Spirit fills their hearts is like the act of filling a water bottle, or like filling a tire with air, or like a ton of grain filling an empty basket.

The heart of a Christian is not a receptacle to be emptied so that the Holy Spirit can fill it. The Holy Spirit is not a substance with which an empty receptacle can be filled. He is a spiritual Person who can enter into a believer and control his life.

Believers sometimes pray: “Oh, Lord, fill us to the full with the Holy Spirit,” or “Oh God, give me a double portion of Your Spirit.” When such prayers are prayed,

believers often keep waiting for Someone up above to pour out His Spirit, as water is poured from a pitcher, over them to fill them.

The real essence of being filled with the Spirit is simply to let the Holy Spirit, who is with the believer, totally control his life — it is to yield entirely to the Holy Spirit.

So, being “filled” with the Spirit simply means that the Holy Spirit possesses or controls the will, the intellect, and the emotions (the soul) of the believer. The Holy Spirit controls all the activities of the believer who is filled with the Spirit. When a person is filled with the Spirit, he is surely under the control of that divine Person.

It can easily be seen that, although steps one, two, and three must occur before step number four can take place, unless this last step becomes a reality in the believer’s life, the other steps become unimportant.

Living in the fullness of the Spirit requires not only the experiences of the new birth, of sanctification, and of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but it also requires a continual submission to the Spirit who resides in the believer. As Paul says: “Do not quench the Spirit,” “fan into flame the gift of God that is in you...,” and “be filled with the Spirit.”

How to live in the fullness “of” the Spirit simply means that the believer must be born of the Spirit, sanctified “by” the Spirit, baptized “in or with” the Spirit, and developed “through” the Spirit.

Steps one, two, three, and four represent the only way in which the believer can live a life in the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be born, sanctified, and developed “of, by, in, and through” the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION: UPWARD, ONWARD, AND BEYOND — OF, BY, IN, AND THROUGH THE SPIRIT

It has been said that truth is useful to all who take advantage of it. A life truly filled with the Spirit will be useful to every believer who allows the truth of the Word of God to be fruitful in his life. It is a tremendous challenge to accept the full-gospel message of the Word of God and to be filled with the Spirit.

There is an extraordinary passage of Scripture that illustrates exactly where each believer stands in his own Christian experience. Matthew records an incident in the life of Jesus that should help every sincere Christian determine whether or not he is fully filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit to the point illustrated in this passage of Scripture should be the desire of every born-again believer.

There is something singular in this passage of Matthew 26:36–39. Jesus, as He enters the garden, arranges His disciples in a particular pattern. It is not known whether Jesus had this particular arrangement every time He and His disciples visited the garden, or whether this was done for that special and exclusive occasion.

The fact that they went to the garden often is evident, since John records the following in this regard: “Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.” Whether that was the arrangement they used every time they visited the garden is not known. Nevertheless, when they went according to this passage, the Word of God reveals a very notable arrangement among the disciples.

Jesus found Himself at a critical time in His ministry. In fact, it may have been the most crucial time of His entire earthly life. He was preparing for the final and greatest humiliation of His earthly ministry. Jesus, the very Son of God, in all His glory and majesty, would soon die a shameful death on the cross.

It is highly significant for believers today to note the arrangement and duties of the three groups in the garden during this crucial time of agony and desperation for Jesus Christ. He was facing the challenge of His life. Did the apostles know it? What were they doing? Where were they?

A diligent reading of this passage of the Bible will reveal that there was a difference in location, a difference in size, and a difference in duties of the three groups in the garden. As Jesus entered the garden — which was probably a fairly large plot of land with many olive trees at the foot of the Mount of Olives — He turned to His disciples and said: “Sit here.”

Eight of His disciples sat in the inner part of the garden. Jesus took Peter, James, and John a little farther from the others and told them to watch. Then He withdrew about a stone's throw from all of them to pray intensely: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

It is obvious that the three groups were in different locations: one group was inside the garden, another a little farther into the same garden, and another still farther within the garden. Does such an arrangement have any meaning for Jesus and the disciples? Does such a pattern of location say anything to the Church today? Is this an indication of how many people get involved in any situation of real crisis?

This arrangement of the garden says something more than mere location, for it also speaks of size. When Jesus said to the group, "Sit here," eight of them sat down. This group was the largest of all. The second group, which went a little farther into the garden, consisted of three. The third group, which actually consisted of a single person, had gone farthest into the garden.

The groups decreased in number as they went deeper into the garden, until Jesus was left alone in prayer: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

This passage of Scripture reveals something more than location and size, for it also speaks of duty. The largest group, inside the garden but closest to the entrance gate, was to remain "sitting there." The next group, smaller in size but farther into the garden, was to wait, watch, and pray. Finally, Jesus was left alone in the farthest place in the garden, the one who would offer the final prayer.

Jesus Christ was facing the crisis of His life. It would seem logical to assume that all the disciples should have been at the center of the battle, praying with all their strength: "Nevertheless, not as we will, but as you will." It is granted to every believer to conquer his own Gethsemane by himself before he can conquer his cross.

Nevertheless, having eight followers merely sitting and three more sleeping must surely have been disconcerting to the Master. This passage of Scripture carries an extraordinary message.

Just as Jesus Christ faced the greatest crisis of His life, the Church of God is also facing a crucial time. The world situation, the coming of Jesus, and the arrival of the antichrist dictate the seriousness of this crisis. In the midst of this crucial time, where are you?

Are you sitting in the back pews of the church, of the kingdom, of the garden? Is your lot cast among the majority of other Christians who are sitting while the heat of the battle increases? The “silent majority” is a reality among the ranks of Christianity. Where are you sitting?

In the midst of this demanding time, have you progressed toward the interior of the garden, the kingdom, the Church? Are you one of those smaller numbers who have dedicated their lives at least enough to move away from the “entrance gate”? Although you may fall asleep from time to time, you have received the order to watch and pray, rather than to sit. Where are you?

Could it be said that you have gone farther than the rest, and that you can pray: “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”? If you pray the prayer and do it sincerely, as Jesus did, you will be within the minority group. You are one of those “consecrated to the cross.”

You do not belong to the multitude, nor to those who advance slowly upward; on the contrary, you belong to the group of those who pray: “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Many times you will be alone!

Furthermore, there is another group involved in this incident of Gethsemane; it is not even in the garden. They know about the garden, for they have been there with Jesus, but today they are outside with Judas, who betrayed the Lord and today awaits the opportunity to crucify Him.

When a believer honestly evaluates his position in the “garden,” such a duty should keep him awake. It should encourage him to desire to go beyond anything he has ever done for Jesus Christ. There must be a spark of desire that becomes a consuming fire, rising higher and higher out of himself until it reaches the perfect will of God. His cry must be: “Let me rise out of the valley of sin that is outside the garden.

Let me rise beyond the meadows in the seats at the garden’s entrance. Let me climb above the plateaus of watching and prayer. Let me go higher and higher and beyond myself, so that I may pray the final prayer: ‘Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will,’ and say it with my whole life.”

The believer must not be satisfied with the mere experience of being born again. Conversion is a momentary and wonderful decision.

In fact, it is the most important event in life; nevertheless, it is only the beginning. The Word of God cries out continually to the believer: “Let us go on to perfection.” Let us

go beyond the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ. Going on toward perfection.

The experience of salvation (justification and sanctification) is the beginning, but the newly born child must keep growing. The believer must make a commitment to Jesus Christ that leads him into the deepest depths of the Holy Spirit.

Just as a child needs the loving and tender care of a mother (not only that the mother gives him birth into the world, but also her loving and tender care), the believer needs the loving and tender care of the Holy Spirit.

The believer has been born of the Spirit and sanctified by the Spirit, but now he needs to be baptized in the Spirit. It is vital that he go to His deepest depths in order to emerge upward and away from the struggles of this life.

The believer who has been born again of the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and baptized in the Spirit is now ready to be developed through the Spirit. The key to such development or growth is the believer's submission to the Spirit.

It is vital that every person reach the plane of salvation; from there, he must ascend to the heights of sanctification, then keep ascending higher until he reaches other heights in the Christian experience — the baptism in the Holy Spirit — and finally march toward yet another higher plateau — the continual and total control of the Spirit. He must keep ascending until he reaches the perfect will of God. He must keep going upward and onward until he enjoys a full life in the Holy Spirit.

“How to Live in the Fullness of the Spirit” requires not only the first step (Being Born of the Spirit), the second step (Being Sanctified by the Spirit), and the third step (Being Baptized in the Spirit), but it also requires the fourth step (Being Developed Through the Spirit).

Of course, steps one, two, and three, as important as they are, come to nothing unless step number four becomes a reality. Being “filled with the Spirit” is a commitment that must be made with the Holy Spirit for life. It is time for every believer to accept the challenge of going upward, onward, and beyond, until reaching the total control of the Spirit. It is the only way to live. That is living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. James Stone, founder of Christian Ministries, Inc., has a fifty-year track record in ministry, encompassing counseling, pastoring, and teaching. He emphasizes that the transforming principles of grace are not learned from books, but are revealed through personal encounters with Jesus.

Dr. Stone maintains that a true understanding of Jesus comes from direct revelation, and not from human teaching. He currently lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA.