

June 20 [Child sacrifice – Culmination of demonic worship]
1 Kings 22:1-53

22:1–12 After Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, agree to recapture Ramoth-gilead from the Arameans (the Syrians), they inquire of Yahweh through 400 prophets of the royal court. The prophets ensure the kings that Ramoth-gilead will be given to Ahab. The kings summon the prophet Micaiah for a second opinion.

22:1 They lived three years, and there was no war between Aram and Israel This peace probably resulted from the treaty between Ahab and Ben-hadad (20:32–34), after Israel defeated Aram (Syria) twice.

22:2 Jehoshaphat Son and successor of Asa (15:24). Jehoshaphat’s reign is briefly recorded after the death of Ahab (vv. 41–50).

22:3 Ramoth-Gilead belongs to us It is unclear when Ramoth-gilead came under Aramean (Syrian) control. First Kings 4:13 names it as one of Solomon’s provinces; according to Ahab’s agreement with Ben-hadad (20:32–34), Aram was to return to Israel all Aramean cities formerly under Israel’s control.

22:4 my horses are like your horses Jehoshaphat repeats a similar formula when allying with Ahab’s successor (2 Kgs 3:7).

22:5 inquire for The book of Kings uses the Hebrew word *darash* when prophets seek knowledge from Yahweh (1 Kgs 14:5).

22:6 the king of Israel assembled the prophets Previously, priests participated in such consultations (see Num 27:21; 1 Sam 30:7–8).

four hundred First Kings 18:19 identifies 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (18:19).

the Lord While multiple Hebrew manuscripts and the Aramaic translations (or Targums) have God’s personal name, Yahweh, here, most manuscripts read *adonay*, meaning “lord”—a generic term that can be applied to any master, whether human or divine. The use of *adonay* suggests that the word from the 400 prophets is not from Yahweh.

22:7 prophet of Yahweh Ahab’s 400 prophets did not satisfy Jehoshaphat, who calls specifically for a prophet of Yahweh. Greek and Latin versions omit “another,” apparently to emphasize that the 400 prophets were false. Although the 400 were part of the royal court (v. 10), Jehoshaphat seems to have doubted that they were prophets of Yahweh.

22:10 the threshing floor Winnowing was a seasonal activity, so the threshing floor would have been empty the rest of the year.

22:11 With these you shall gore the Arameans Ancient Near Eastern literature from as early as 3400 BC, including the OT, portrays kings and gods as bulls pushing down their enemies with their horns (e.g., the Hittite “Crossing of the Taurus”; compare Num 23:22–24; Deut 33:17; Pss 22:12; 92:10).

22:16 How many times must I make you swear that you shall not tell me anything but truth in the name of Yahweh? Since Micaiah was known for giving King Ahab only bad news (1 Kings 22:8), his favorable response causes Ahab to suspect that he is lying or being sarcastic.

22:17 sheep without a shepherd Comparing kings and leaders to shepherds is a common motif in ancient Near Eastern literature, including the OT (e.g., Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34:1–6; Zech 13:7). Here, the leaderless flock will be Israel’s army.

22:18 he would not prophesy good concerning me Ahab did not consult Micaiah in the first place for this reason (1 Kgs 22:8).

22:19 the hosts of heaven Here, this phrase refers to members of the heavenly court (Psa 82; Job 1–2) who are allowed to decide how to carry out Yahweh’s divine decree that Ahab must die (1 Kings 22:21–23). Elsewhere, the same terminology is broadly used to refer to celestial bodies, which other nations worshiped; Israel was forbidden from this type of worship (e.g., Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3; Jer 8:2; 19:13).

22:21 a spirit Refers to a specific spirit. The actions of this spirit resemble those of the adversary who comes forward to test Job (Job 1–2; see note on Job 1:6); however, that term is not used to describe the spirit in this passage.

22:22 a false spirit The Hebrew here indicates that this is a spirit of deception.

22:24 Zedekiah son of Kenaanah One of the 400 prophets who foretold victory for Ahab (1 Kgs 22:11).
slapped Micaiah on the cheek A gesture meant to humiliate.

did the Spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak with you Zedekiah does not recognize that he speaks with a spirit of deception and therefore accuses Micaiah of doing so.

22:25 from room to room Similarly, Ben-hadad hid in an inner chamber in the city of Aphek during his second battle against Ahab (20:30).

22:26 the city Refers to Samaria (v. 10).

22:27 in the house of imprisonment The Israelites could confine suspects until their case was decided (Num 15:32–36; Lev 24:10–12). Presumably, Micaiah was released after his prophecy proved true, although the text does not say so.

this See note on 1 Kgs 20:7.

until I come in peace Meaning until Micaiah's prophecy is proven false.

22:28 Yahweh has not spoken with me The proof of a valid prophet is whether his prophecy comes true (Deut 18:21–22).

22:30 you wear your robes This would make Jehoshaphat the prime target for the enemy.

the king of Israel disguised himself Ahab's desire to blend in with the troops instead of leading them confirms Micaiah's accusation that he does not "shepherd" his flock (1 Kgs 22:17).

22:31 his thirty-two chariot commanders Ben-hadad replaced his 32 allied kings with these 32 captains (20:24).

22:32 Surely he is the king of Israel Jehoshaphat's true identity is confirmed upon closer inspection (20:33).

Jehoshaphat called out The content of this cry is unknown. 1–2 Chronicles adds that Jehoshaphat called upon Yahweh, who helped him (2 Chr 18:31). It may have been a Judaic war cry or he may have been simply telling the captains his true identity.

22:34 drew his bow fully The archer disobeys Ben-hadad's command to fight only against the king of Israel (1 Kgs 22:31).

Turn the chariot This gesture both turns the chariot and signals a change in direction to the forces (see 2 Kgs 9:23).

22:35 the king was being propped up in the chariot Contrary to his wish to be carried away from battle, the king is made to stand.

22:36 each to his land Fulfills the rest of Micaiah's prophecy (1 Kings 22:17). Israel's army is without a leader (v. 30), and the troops retreat as a result.

22:38 the pool of Samaria Archaeologists have excavated a small pool (5 × 10 m) in the royal quarters at Samaria.

the dogs licked his blood A parallel to Elijah's prophecy (21:19).

the prostitutes Elijah does not mention prostitutes in his prophecy concerning Ahab's death (21:19–24). The Targums (ancient Aramaic translations) and ancient Syriac translations interpret the Hebrew word used here, *zonah* (meaning "harlot" or "prostitute"), as *zēna* (meaning "armor"), resulting in the translation "the armor was washed." This spelling correction to the Hebrew text makes sense of this otherwise enigmatic line.

22:39 the ivory palace See note on 10:18. The ivory inlays were probably set into the paneling. Archeologists have excavated more than 500 ivory fragments, carved in Phoenician style, in a burnt building at Samaria. While the date of this stratum is debated, it may date to the ninth-century and the Omride kings—especially Ahab.

all the cities that he built Many archaeological sites in northern Israel that were once ascribed to the building activities of Solomon (9:10–22)—such as Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer (9:15)—have been redated to the ninth-century and the Omride kings, especially Ahab.

the events of the days of the kings of Israel See note on 14:19.

22:40 slept with his ancestors See note on 2:10.

22:41–50 The author first introduced Jehoshaphat in 15:24, as the son and successor of Asa, king of Judah. Although the narrator has already recounted Jehoshaphat's involvement with Ahab and Israel's war against Syria (vv. 1–33), this is the first time the narrator formally describes Jehoshaphat's reign.

22:42 he reigned twenty-five years Jehoshaphat reigned from about 873–848 BC. See 2 Chr 17:1–21:1.

Northern King	Date	Southern King	Date
Ahab	874–853 BC	Jehoshaphat	873–848 BC
Ahaziah	853–852 BC		
Jehoram/Joram	852–841 BC	Jehoram	848–841 BC

22:43 he did not remove the high places Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, also allowed the high places to remain, yet he was found faithful—suggesting that in the viewpoint of 1 Kings, they were not used for idolatrous worship during his time (1 Kings 15:14).

22:44 made peace with the king of Israel The Hebrew word used here, *shalem*, conveys the sense of surrender (Deut 20:12; Josh 10:1; 11:19). Israel and Judah wage war from the time the monarchy splits (see 1 Kings 14:30; 15:16, 32) until Jehoram's marriage to Ahab's daughter (2 Kgs 8:18).

22:46 the male shrine prostitutes See note on 14:24.

22:47 There was not a king in Edom The last king of Edom mentioned was Hadad, who rebelled against Solomon (11:14–22).

22:48 ships of the Tarshish type to go to Ophir Second Chronicles 20:35–37 fills in a few details about this ill-fated attempt to resume the maritime activities of Solomon (1 Kings 9:26–28; 10:11, 22). The Hebrew text refers to these ships as of Tarshish type; Tarshish was a distant trading port (see note on Jonah 1:3). Ophir, also mentioned here, was possibly in Arabia and was known for fine gold (see note on Job 28:16).

22:50 slept with his ancestors See note on 1 Kings 2:10.

22:52 his mother Probably refers to Jezebel.

the way of Jeroboam Apparently, the idolatrous practices begun by Jeroboam (12:25–33) remained in place during Ahaziah's reign.

22:53 Baal The Canaanite storm god.¹

The Low Point in Spiritual Warfare

Human Sacrifice

Before looking at the nadir or lowest point to which the demonic religions of the Old Testament world had sunk, two remarks must be made about Israel's understanding of the demonic activity found in pagan religious practices. **First**, not all Israelites at all times recognized they were involved in direct encounter with demons as they related to the gods and idols of the peoples of the Promised Land. Their

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (1 Ki 22:1–53). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

understanding waxed and waned in relation to the closeness of their walk with Yahweh, the true God. **Second**, their view of the spirit world was always filtered through their view of the absolute sovereignty of God. Israel could not conceive of Satan or his seducing spirits being able to work among believers without the direct permission of God.

Satan and the spirits could do what they wished with the pagans since they were actually worshipping them anyway. They understood that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20). But when it came to disturbing a child of God directly, they had first to obtain direct permission from God (Job 1–2). The Jews also knew that in some cases God Himself sent evil spirits to punish His disobedient children (1 Kings 22:19–23).

When God Sent an Evil Spirit: 1 Kings 22

The 1 Kings 22 passage has disturbed commentators for centuries. To even begin to understand what is occurring it must be seen in its context. Wicked King Ahab is at war with Syria (22:1f). Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, pays him a visit (22:2). Up until now he has been an excellent king (2 Chron. 17). His only major mistake, one he committed twice, was seeking a close relationship with the kings of Israel. God rebuked him through the prophet Jehu for his alliance with Ahab, but forgave him (2 Chron. 19:1f). He did not forgive him when he repeated this sin with King Ahaziah of Israel (2 Chron. 20:35–21:1).

Ahab wants God to sanction his plan to go to war with the Syrians (1 Kings 22:5f). He assembles his 400 false prophets who give him the go-ahead word (22:6,10–12). Jehoshaphat does not trust them. He asks for a true prophet (v. 7). Ahab says there is one but he hates him because he does not support the king’s evil policies (v. 8). At Jehoshaphat’s insistence Ahab sends for him (v. 9).

When Micaiah arrives, he decides to go along with the deception, telling Ahab to go to war and promising he will win (vv. 13–15). Ahab knows he is toying with him and asks for the truth (v. 16). He gets it (vv. 17–23). Micaiah suffers for his integrity (vv. 24–28).

Micaiah has a vision. In that vision God is declaring His plan to take the life of Ahab, perhaps the most wicked of all Israel’s wicked kings (v. 19f). In that vision, first we see Jehovah, the LORD (v. 19a). Next is His heavenly council standing on His right and left. These evidently represent the council of the Watcher angels already referred to. The Lord asks the best strategy to lead Ahab to his own defeat. There is general disagreement in the council (v. 20). Suddenly a “spirit” comes forward. He offers to be a “deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his [Ahab’s] prophets” (v. 22a). His offer is accepted by God (v. 22b).

Micaiah interprets the vision to the two kings and evidently before all the lying prophets. He says, “the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you” (v. 23). Needless to say, this did not make Micaiah very popular with King Ahab and his prophets (vv. 24–28).

How is this passage to be understood? Once again, the problem is a world view problem. Filtered through the Jewish view of the spirit world already mentioned, there is no problem. What Micaiah described in his vision occurred as he describes it. In his description, he resorts to anthropomorphism. God is seen as a king seeking advice of His council of wise men. He is also seen as Lord even over the evil spirits. Since His people are involved (Ahab was the leader of one group of God’s people), the lying spirit must obtain God’s permission to cause the death of Ahab. The permission is granted because it fits God’s plans.

As Matthew Henry says, “It is not without the divine permission that the devil deceives men, and even thereby God serves His own purpose.”

Finally, the New Testament provides us with the needed balance at this point. Satan and his demons are fully developed personalities with mind, emotions, and will. Like the men they inspire towards evil, they can scheme against God’s people, attack and afflict them, defeat and even kill the children of God (1 Thess. 2:18; 3:5; Rev. 2:10; 12:17; 13:7). Yet, the child of God who puts on the full armor of God and learns spiritual warfare is protected from serious injury by the Evil One. Satan’s freedom in the evil he does against God’s people is still subject to God’s sovereign will. Sin and unbelief on the part of the believer, however, opens him to direct satanic-demonic attack (1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5; Eph. 4:27).

The Demonic Practice of Child Sacrifice

As we continue with the Old Testament encounter with the spirit world we must now examine the most horrible dimension of demonic religious activity among Israel's neighbors, the practice of child sacrifice. I do this for three major reasons.

First, child sacrifice was commonly practiced not only among the pagan Canaanites but in all probability among most of the major people groups whose inhabitants worshipped the same or similar gods as the Canaanites.

Second, in most major periods of apostasy, Israel fell into the darkness of this horrible practice. Thus it was a major feature of Israel's terrible defeat in its warfare with the spirit world.

Third, child sacrifice has resurfaced in our day in Satanism, satanic cults, and in many witchcraft cults now flourishing in America and other parts of the Western world. It also still exists in some areas of the Two-thirds World.

There are dozens of references to child sacrifice to the gods in the Old Testament. There are none in the New Testament. Roman law, which dominated the New Testament world, did not permit human sacrifice. Unfortunately for the thousands of human beings—mostly children—sacrificed to the gods and the spirits during the Old Testament era, no such laws existed. If they did exist, they were not enforced. E. E. Carpenter lists the key phrases used in the Old Testament which refer to child sacrifice. The phrase used most frequently is “cause to pass over” followed by one or more of the following phrases: “to Molech” (Jer. 32:35); “through the fire” (2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Ezek. 20:31); or the combination of “Molech” with “through the fire” in 2 Kings 23:10; “burnt offerings” (Judg. 11:31; 2 Kings 3:27); and “caused their sons, whom they bore to Me [God is speaking], to pass through the fire to them [the idols] as food” (Ezek. 23:37).

In Ezekiel 16:21; 20:26 the verbal form “cause to pass over” is used alone, “but the meaning is clear,” Carpenter says. It means “you slaughtered My children, and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire” (Ezek. 16:21).

Then we have “burn in the fire to [the god]” (Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 17:31; Jer. 7:31; 19:51); and “offer it up as a burnt offering,” also referring to child sacrifice, in Judges 11:31, the story of the daughter of Jephthah, and in 2 Kings 3:27, the story of the oldest son of the king of Moab.

Carpenter notes that the common Hebrew word for sacrifice, *zabah*, is used in Psalm 106:37, for “they even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons.” Again, the Old Testament clearly recognizes the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:20, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God.” When the Jews imitated these practices and sacrificed their children to the gods or even to Jehovah, they too were actually sacrificing to demons. The same, of course, is true in religious child sacrifice today.

In Ezekiel 16:20 and 23:39 we again have *zabah*. In the first case the verse says, “Your sons and your daughters whom you had borne to Me . . . you sacrificed them to idols to be devoured” (Ezek. 16:20). In the second case it is, “for when they had slaughtered their children for their idols” (Ezek. 23:39). In both cases the charges were being brought against rebellious Israel and Judah.

It should be pointed out that the Israelites became involved in this heinous practice primarily in their days of war and apostasy. This practice was prohibited and strongly condemned by God at every period in Israel's history, from Genesis to Malachi.

Carpenter surveys the practice of human or child sacrifice in the ancient Near East. He points out that the practice was widespread in Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, and in Africa; especially in Phoenician Carthage. The Phoenicians were Canaanites who migrated to North Africa. Human/child sacrifice was also practiced by the Chinese, Celts, Aztecs, and Mayans; in Sardinia, Sicily, Tunisia, and probably other places.

Lawrence E. Stager and Samuel R. Wolff, in a recent report on ancient child sacrifice, note that the Phoenician cemetery in Carthage, North Africa, dedicated exclusively as the repository of the burnt bones of child and animal sacrifices, “is the largest cemetery of sacrificed humans ever discovered. Child

sacrifice took place there almost continuously for a period of over 600 years” from about 400 B.C. to the third century A.D. It probably began about 800 B.C., however.

Tertullian (160–225 A.D.), the great church father from Carthage, writes about this horrible practice continuing even in his day. He calls it “the evil activity of Satan causing his servants to sacrifice their own children to him.” He then writes that

in Africa infants used to be sacrificed to Saturn [Satan]. . . . Yes, and to this day that unholy crime persists in secret. . . . Saturn did not spare his own children . . . their own parents offered them to him, were glad to respond and fondled their children that they might not be sacrificed in tears.

Stager and Wolff further say that the biblical name Tophet, taken from Jeremiah 7:30–32, is the name used to refer to all such places of sacrifice and repositories of the remains of children sacrificed to the gods. Tophet names a location in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom on the south side of ancient Jerusalem where ritual sacrifice-by-fire took place:

“The people of Judah have done evil in my sight,” saith the Lord. . . . “They build the high place of Tophet, which is in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in fire. Such a thing I never commanded, nor had in mind.” (Jer. 7:30–32)

Biblical references connect the Tophet to Baal worship:

They rejected the commandments of the Lord . . . and served Baal. They consigned their sons and daughters to the fire (2 Kings 17:16–17; see also Jer. 32:35).

In 2 Kings 23:10 and Jeremiah 32:35, we find strong suggestions that Tophet was also associated with the Canaanite god Molech.

The Jerusalem Tophet was dismantled by King Josiah in the seventh century B.C. “[King Josiah of Judah] defiled Tophet, which is in the Valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire for Molech.” (2 Kings 23:10)

Whether this was its first destruction and whether it was thereafter rebuilt, we cannot be sure.

These Biblical references have led modern scholars to call by the name Tophet the huge cemetery of sacrificed children at Phoenician Carthage, as well as similar precincts at other Phoenician sites in Sicily, Sardinia and Tunisia.

The cemetery at Carthage is between 54,000 and 64,000 square feet. It may contain as many as 20,000 urns with the remains of the children sacrificed, plus bones of animals also sacrificed. Some urns contained the charred remains of two to three children. Their ages ran from the earliest days of birth to six years of age, evidently all from the same family. Thousands of additional urns were lost when the Romans destroyed the cemetery in 146 B.C. While unlawful, the practice of child sacrifice continued.

The Phoenicians established Tophets in many of their leading cities and trading centers. For centuries the Phoenicians were the great merchants, traders, sailors, and craftsmen of the biblical world. In 900 B.C. the Phoenician king, Hiram of Tyre, provided King Solomon with the necessary materials to build the great Jewish temple. Phoenicians also were the sailors of Solomon’s fleets (1 Kings 5:1ff; 7:13–45; 10:11,22).

The Case of Abraham and Isaac: Genesis 22

The first mention of the subject of human sacrifice in the Bible is in Genesis 22. There God commands Abraham to offer up his promised son, Isaac (vv. 1–2) in one of the most dramatic, controversial stories in the Old Testament. Abraham was probably well acquainted with the child sacrifice of Mesopotamia and of some of the tribes in the land of Canaan where he lived. He knew it was wrong. He also knew God would somehow intervene, even if it meant God would have to raise his son from the dead (vv. 5–8). “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son,” (v. 8) is the key phrase. It was spoken in answer to Isaac’s question, “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (v. 7).

The writer of Hebrews provides us with new insight into Abraham’s faith as he responded in obedience to God’s strange request that he offer Isaac in sacrifice.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.” He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. (Heb. 11:17–19)

Carpenter says that Abraham was startled by Yahweh's demand, but not unfamiliar with the requirement. The sacrifice does not occur, however. The story, as it stands, rejects human sacrifice. Instead it both stresses Abraham's faith and demonstrates Yahweh's ability to provide an approved substitute sacrifice. Carpenter states that "Genesis 22 thus indicates that human sacrifice was not approved in the time of Abraham, Israel's most remote ancestor."

In Leviticus 18:20, God forbids child sacrifice, equating it with profanation of His name. Leviticus 20:2–5 declares that anyone who practices child sacrifice, i.e., "who gives any of his offspring to Molech," is to be stoned to death. That man and his family would have their name cut off from Israel "for playing the harlot with Molech," God says (v. 5). God goes so far as to say if others knew of the man's sin and did not have him executed, they too would come under the same curse (v. 4–5). What more powerful warning against, and condemnation of, the practice could ever be given!

Deuteronomy 12:29–31 has Moses talking with Israel about the conquest of the Promised Land. Moses says God will cut "off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you are to dispossess them and dwell in their land" (v. 29). He next says Israel must "beware that you are not ensnared to follow them" (v. 30). He then lists some of the abominable acts which the inhabitants of the land were guilty of which caused God to have them destroyed (vv. 30b–31a). The worst act of all, God says, is "they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods" (v. 31b).

The historical books contain the greatest amount of references to child sacrifice in the early books of the Old Testament. References occur in most of the books from Judges to 2 Chronicles. Judges 1–2:10 reveals Israel's failure to destroy the Canaanites. Chapters 2:11–3:8 reveal their apostasy and God's decision not to drive out the rest of the remaining evil nations as he had promised. This was because of Israel's continual disobedience. They fell into idolatry and immorality, God says, especially in the worship of the god and goddess pair, Baal and Ashtoreth.

The Baal-Ashtoreth connection was the most vile form of pagan worship imaginable, as we have already discovered. It involved religious prostitution, orgies, and child sacrifice. The child sacrifice at Carthage was also devoted to this god-goddess pair, Baal and Ashtoreth. In Carthage they were known as Baal-Hammon and Tanit. Tanit was the same as Ashtoreth.

In Judges 3–21 the battle with the spirit world goes on. That these chapters reflect an ongoing power encounter is clear in the account of Gideon recorded in Judges 6:1–35. There Gideon, in true power encounter style, destroys the altar of Baal and his companion Asherah (vv. 25–27). The people are so angry they decide to kill Gideon (vv. 28–30). Gideon's father, Joash, defends his son: "Let Baal defend himself if he is what he claims to be" (see vv. 31–32). It is amusing reading.

One case of child sacrifice in Israel has to do with Jephthah (Judg. 11:1–40). She was not a child, but a daughter of marriageable age. It is a tragic story of zeal for God, cursed by syncretism. The vow Jephthah took was totally contrary to the law of God (vv. 29–40). The response of the daughters of Israel to the sacrifice of Jephthah reveal the writer's and the nation's negative view of Jephthah's action (vv. 37–40).

First Kings, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles contain terrible stories of child sacrifice among the pagans but especially among the Jews. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, and others refer to this abominable practice.

We are witnessing a terrible revival of child mutilation and sacrifice in our day. Later in our study I give a major case study of my deliverance and counseling ministry with a missionary who is an adult survivor of Satanic Ritual Abuse in which her Satanist father attempted to offer her in sacrifice to Satan.

We are also witnessing an organized satanic conspiracy to refute the accounts of child sacrifice in the U.S. and other parts of the Western world. This is a satanically inspired cover-up. Dozens of children have come forth testifying how they were tortured into submission to wicked satanic leaders. They also were made to participate in the sacrifice of other little children to Satan.

Adults converted to Christ from Satanism and satanic cults have told horrible stories of child sacrifice. Major television news programs have given shocking revelations of the practice. Adult survivors have appeared on talk shows telling the horror of child sacrifice which they witnessed or were forced to participate in as children and young people, even as adults. The books by Wilder (1992) and Friesen (1991) document these horrors. Other references in the bibliography at the end of this book and in the chapters on child abuse tell where more information can be obtained.

The revival of paganism in America will only increase unless a nationwide Christian revival occurs to break the back of this demonic evil. In the meantime, let us use every weapon at our disposal to help save our children from this ultimate evil.²

² Murphy, E. F. (1996). *Handbook for spiritual warfare* (pp. 245–250). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Acts 13:16-41

[Be being filled vs 32 and Ephesians pg 28-36]

S/G What does this mean?

Page 8: His Word Endures Forever

Note the emphasis in Acts 13 on the Word of God (vv. 5, 7, 15, 26, 44, 46, 48–49). In his preaching, Paul quoted from 1 Samuel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Psalms. He preached salvation by faith in Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead (vv. 38–39). Our words do not last, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.³

WORD WEALTH

13:17 strangers, *paroikia* (par-oy-kee-ah); Strong's #3940: Aliens, foreigners, strangers, sojourners, noncitizens dwelling as resident exiles. (Compare “parochial” and “parish.”) Israel sojourned in Egypt on a *paroikia* basis. Their permanent home was the land of Canaan. 1 Pet. 1:17 uses *paroikia* in the spiritual sense. Christians live temporarily as aliens in an unfriendly world. The Lord has prepared for them a final home based on permanency, duration, and endless time.

13:17 A typical Acts sermon (see note on 3:12-26), including 1) a review of Jewish history (vv. 17-22); 2) a sketch of the life of Christ (vv. 23-31) with an emphasis on His resurrection (vv. 30, 33, 34); 3) OT texts to prove that Jesus is the Messiah (vv. 32-37); 4) a call to hear the message, repent, and believe (vv. 38-41). **Justified** (v. 39) here has the idea of being set free.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

13:22 A Teachable Spirit, LEADER TRAITS. Only one man in the Bible enjoys the designation of being a man after God's own heart—David. To outward appearance, David is more readily remembered as a gross sinner. He committed adultery, murdered, lied, betrayed his nation, made severe mistakes in judgment, was a poor manager, and finally was unable to manage his home. Yet God said, “I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will” (v. 22). Almost every time we read about David, he was doing something wrong, yet God commended the heart of his leadership. How do we explain it? The answer is in the fact that with every mistake, David repented; and of equal importance, he learned from his mistakes. Not only was he humble and teachable, but he listened to his critics and his enemies as well; and, foremost of all, he heeded the prophets of God. This teachable spirit is the trait that caused God to classify him as Israel's finest leader.

WORD WEALTH

13:32 promise, *epangelia* (ep-ang-el-ee-ah); Strong's #1860: Both a promise and the thing promised, an announcement with the special sense of promise, pledge, and offer. *Epangelia* tells what the promise from God is and then gives the assurance that the thing promised will be done. 2 Cor. 1:20 asserts, “For all the promises (*epangelia*) of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1991). [With the Word Bible Commentary](#) (Ac 13:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

13:42 The Gentiles here were converts to the Jewish religion.

13:46 These are important transitional verses in the narrative. The preaching of the gospel is beginning to turn away from the Jewish community. Paul began his ministry in each new city by entering the synagogue, but rejection by the Jews forced him to preach to Gentile audiences.

13:48 The primary significance of the phrase **appointed to eternal life** is not theological but historical, as Luke traces the spread of the gospel from its Jewish origins to the Gentile world. This reference underscores God's initiative in individual salvation. Throughout the Bible there are references to God's hand of providence influencing people and altering the course of human history. Every Christian, in retrospect, can see how God carefully orchestrated particular events that changed his or her life forever. See Prov. 16:9; Dan. 4:34, 35; Acts 2:22-24; Eph. 1:3-5.

13:51 Shook off the dust is a dramatic symbol of divine abandonment. See Matt. 10:14.

13:52 The tense of the verb **were filled** signifies a continuous filling.⁴

Be being filled?

Prophets functioned in the early church as proclaimers of God's revelation. **Teachers** explained the meaning of the revelation and helped the people apply it to their lives. In the early church the prophets were the preachers—the ones who communicated revelation directly from the Spirit of God. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers (see Eph. 4:11) took what was taught or declared and made it applicable for the daily nurture of people's lives. **Antioch** was the base of operation for Saul.

13:2 ministered to the Lord: As the people carried out what God had given them to do as prophets or teachers, their ministry to the church became their ministry to the Lord. Whenever we serve each other, God accepts that service as directly unto Him (see Matt. 25:31–46).

13:3 The laying on of **hands** was the church's way of identifying with and affirming the mission to which God had called a particular person.

13:5 John was John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas (12:25).

13:6–12 Luke presents **Sergius Paulus** as the first Gentile ruler to believe the gospel. The island of Cyprus was a senatorial island, which means it was Roman controlled. As a Roman official, Sergius was a Gentile. Unlike Cornelius (10:2), there is no evidence that Sergius attended the temple or was a God-fearer. This pagan government official was amazed at the power of God and believed the truth.

13:9 Saul, who also is called Paul: It was not unusual for a person to have two names. In Paul's Jewish surroundings, the name Saul was used. But in his mission to the Gentiles, his Roman name Paul was used. The name Paul means "Small One."

13:13 John, departing from them: Whatever the trouble was between Paul and John Mark, it was enough for Paul not to want John Mark to accompany him on a later journey (15:36–39). John Mark would prove faithful later in Paul's ministry (see 2 Tim. 4:11).

13:14 Why did Paul and his party pass through **Perga** without any reported sharing of the gospel there? Paul might have had some physical affliction that forced him from the lowlands of Perga to the cooler, higher altitudes of **Antioch in Pisidia**, some 3,600 feet above sea level. Later, when Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he spoke about an illness (see Gal. 4:13). Paul's affliction may have affected his eyes in some way. Some think Paul had malaria, which left him with disabling headaches, described by the ancients as like a red-hot bar thrust through the forehead. Possibly this was what Paul meant when he referred to his "thorn in the flesh" (see 2 Cor. 12:7). Antioch in Pisidia was a different city from the Antioch located just north of Palestine in Syria (11:22).

⁴ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Ac 13:15–52). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Word Focus

He put up with

(Gk. *trophoreō*) (13:18) Strong's #5159: This Greek word, which occurs only here in the New Testament, means “to bear with.” But other manuscripts read “cared for” (literally “carried them as a nurse”). The two Greek words differ in only one letter: *etrophophorēsen* (meaning “nourished”) and *etropophorēsen* (meaning “bore with”). *Nourished* is probably a quote from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) translation of Deut. 1:31. With that as the reading, Paul in this sermon to Jews at Antioch was emphasizing God’s great care for the Israelites in the wilderness. Otherwise, Paul was using the expression *He put up with* as a graphic portrayal of God’s patience.

13:20 Some early manuscripts apply the **four hundred and fifty years** to the period before the **judges** referred to in vv. 17–19. In either case the intended extent of the time reference is vague.

13:22 David . . . a man after My own heart: What God saw in David was a deep desire to do His will. Throughout David’s entire life that drive never changed. Unlike King Saul, who was a self-willed man, David confessed his sins and quickly repented of them (see Ps. 51).

13:37 He whom God raised up saw no corruption: Paul argued that David could not have been speaking of himself in Ps. 16:10 (see v. 35). When David died, his body returned to dust just like everyone else’s (see Peter’s comments in 2:29–31). David was speaking of the Messiah, who would be raised from the dead as the final proof of His divine Sonship (see Rom. 1:4).

13:39 everyone who believes is justified: Justification is a legal term meaning “declared innocent” It is a legal declaration that a person is acquitted and absolved. It is by justification that a person is righteous and acceptable to God. The death of Christ was the payment of our sin debt, so that we might be forgiven.

13:45 When Luke refers to **the Jews**, he is not speaking of all Jews. The Jews mentioned in v. 43, those who were urging Paul and Barnabas “to continue in the grace of God,” honestly wanted to know the truth. The Jews in this verse were the Jewish leaders, those in the positions of religious authority. When the Jewish leaders saw the crowds following Paul, they changed their minds about Paul and became filled with jealousy, especially since many of the people who had gathered were Jews.

13:46 judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life: A person who convinces himself that he does not need forgiveness from the Holy One has already condemned himself.⁵

Psalms 138:1-8

Proverbs 17:17-18

⁵ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Ac 13:1–46). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

June 21

2 Kings 1:1-2:25 [Elijah&Elisha-3 sets of soldiers, whirlwind, dbl portion]

2 Kings

1:1-18 The narrative of 1–2 Kings was originally one work that was divided in antiquity, likely because its length required two scrolls. Second Kings begins shortly after King Ahab’s death (853 BC). Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, is now reigning over the northern kingdom of Israel. (In 930 BC, the kingdom was divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.)

Second Kings continues the contrast between apostasy of the Israelite kings and Elijah’s zeal for Yahweh (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 2). Here, the story of Elijah denouncing King Ahaziah uses repetition as a literary device. The tension mounts each time Ahaziah sends a military unit to Elijah, until the pattern of destruction by fire finally ends (2 Kings 1:15).

Introduction to 2 Kings
The Historical Books
How to Study the Bible

1:1 Moab rebelled against Israel Despite its appearance in the opening verse, the story of Moab’s rebellion is put on hold until ch. 3. Apparently, Ahab had either defeated or made an alliance with Moab. See note on 3:4.

rebelled The Hebrew term used here, *pasha'*, means “to transgress,” and is frequently used in legal and religious contexts. In political contexts, *pasha'* refers to the rebellion of a vassal king against his overlord (e.g., 1 Kgs 12:19; compare 2 Kgs 3:5).

1:2 Ahaziah First Kings 22:51–53 introduces Ahaziah as one of the kings of Israel who did evil in the sight of Yahweh. He reigned over Israel briefly circa 853 BC.

inquire The Hebrew word used here, *darash* (meaning “consult” or “inquire”), is a technical term for inquiring of an oracle.

Old Testament Theology and Divination

Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron The name Baal-zebub literally means “lord of flies.” Ekron was one of five major Philistine cities on the border of ancient Israel (Josh 13:3).

Pagan Deities in the Old Testament Table

1:3 the angel of Yahweh The Angel of Yahweh often appears with messages to individuals such as Moses (Exod 3:2), Balaam (Num 22:22–23), or Hagar (Gen 16:7–13).

Old Testament Godhead Language

the king of Samaria Refers to Ahaziah. Samaria was the capital city of Israel from the reign of Omri until its destruction at the hands of the Assyrian Empire (1 Kgs 16:24; 2 Kgs 17:6).

1:8 A hairy man The Hebrew text here reads literally as “owner of hair.” The idea is that Elijah’s garment was distinctive. The narrative mentions Elijah’s garment several times elsewhere (1 Kgs 19:13, 19; 2 Kgs 2:8, 13, 14; compare Zech 13:4).

1:9 the commander of fifty with his fifty men A military unit comprising 50 men and their officer (1 Sam 8:12; Isa 3:3).

O man of God This title designates a true prophet or messenger of God in the book of Kings (1 Kgs 12:22; 13:21; 17:18; 2 Kgs 4:9). It also is used of Moses (Deut 33:1).

1:10 let fire come down from heaven Fire in the OT is associated with the divine presence (see note on 2 Kings 1:12). In 1 Kgs 18, divine fire provides the sign of the true God in Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:24, 38).

Fire as a Motif of Divine Presence

1:11 Come down quickly The first officer to approach Elijah did not demand that he descend “quickly” (2 Kings 1:9). The second officer commands Elijah more forcefully than the first.

1:12 the fire of God The Hebrew phrase used here, *esh-elohim*, may be understood as “fire of God” or indicate the power of the fire, as a translation “mighty fire” or “awesome fire” would imply.

1:13 let my life and the lives of your servants, these fifty, be precious in your eyes The third captain changes his approach to Elijah. Instead of coming with orders from the king, he comes humbly and asks Elijah to spare his life. He recognizes that the authority and power behind Elijah is greater than that of Ahaziah.

1:15 the angel of Yahweh See note on v. 3.

1:17 The Hebrew text of this verse can be confusing, as it lists both a king of Israel and a king of Judah who went by the same name *yehoram* (Jehoram). An alternate rendering of this name is *yoram* (Joram; 8:16). To remove the ambiguity between the king of Judah and the king of Israel, some translations always refer to the king of Israel as Joram and the king of Judah as Jehoram.

Joram became king in his place This king reigned over Israel circa 852–841 BC; he was Ahaziah of Israel’s younger brother and Ahab’s son (3:1). In the ancient Near East, the eldest son usually took the throne upon his father’s death. In the absence of a son, a brother could ascend to the throne.

the second year of Joram the son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah It is difficult to determine a precise chronology of the two kings named Jehoram (one in Israel, one in Judah). The information given in vv. 17; 3:1; and 8:16 appears to conflict. It is possible that the reference to the second year of Jehoram, king of Judah (v. 17), involves a period of coregency with his father, Jehoshaphat (who reigned ca. 873–848 BC); in that case, 8:16 would indicate the beginning of his sole reign in Judah, which would have lasted from approximately 848–841 BC.

Northern King	Date	Southern King	Date
Ahab	874–853 BC	Jehoshaphat	873–848 BC
Ahaziah	853–852 BC		
Jehoram/Joram	852–841 BC	Jehoram	848–841 BC

1:18 the events of the days of the kings of Israel The author of 1–2 Kings may have drawn from this source, which apparently is different from the biblical books of 1–2 Chronicles (given that the Chronicler refers to it, as well; see note on 1 Chr 9:1). The mention of this separate volume suggests that the biblical book of Kings was not intended to be merely a record of events; such information could be found elsewhere.

2:1–14 The narrative shifts to Elijah’s mysterious ascent into heaven on God’s fiery chariot, which marks the end of the prophet’s career (compare Gen 5:24). This narrative marks the beginning of Elisha’s career as the head of the prophets of Yahweh (2 Kgs 2:15–16; compare 1 Kgs 19:19–21).

2:1 the storm The Hebrew word used here, *se’arah*, is associated with both the appearance of God (a theophany) and divine judgment—here it is a testament of God’s presence (Job 38:1; 40:6; Jer 23:19; Zech 9:14).

Theophany in the Old Testament

Elijah and Elisha Elisha was a young farmer living with his parents when he was called to be Elijah’s successor (1 Kgs 19:19–21).

2:2 As Yahweh lives This signifies the swearing of an oath.

2:3 the sons of the prophets A guild or brotherhood of prophets mentioned in 1 Kgs 20:35 but more common in the Elisha stories (2 Kgs 4:1; 5:22; 6:1). Such guilds were stationed in cities throughout the land of Israel, including Bethel and Jericho (vv. 5, 15).

from you This phrase expresses Elijah and Elisha’s relationship in terms of master and servant—Elisha’s apprenticeship is about to end.

2:8 It divided Elisha’s repetition of this action demonstrates his ability to take Elijah’s place (see v. 14). This account parallels Joshua’s parting of the Jordan, which likewise demonstrated God’s presence with Joshua shortly after he succeeded Moses (Josh 3:7–8, 15–17; Exod 14).

Miracles of the Prophets Table

2:9 a double portion The Hebrew phrase used here, *pi shenayim* (literally rendered “according to two shares”), echoes the legal terminology of Deut 21:17, according to which the firstborn was to receive a double share (*pi shenayim*) of the inheritance. Elisha desires for his spiritual inheritance to be like that of a firstborn son—double in share in comparison to Elijah’s other spiritual children, such as other prophets (compare John 14:12–14).

of your spirit As with Moses, the spirit of Elijah is transferrable to others (Num 11:16–17, 24–26). The office of head prophet is transferred from Elijah to Elisha—just as the office of commander of Israel is transferred from Moses to Joshua. This includes the transferring of the Spirit of Yahweh, which was at work in Elijah, to Elisha. Yahweh was the one who originally made this decision (1 Kgs 19:16).

2:11 a fiery chariot with horses of fire Fire in the OT is associated with God’s presence (compare 2 Kgs 1:10, 12). The chariots and horses belong to Yahweh (Hab 3:8).

the storm See 2 Kings 2:1 and note.

Paul and the “Third Heaven”

2:12 My father In the OT, groups sometimes applied the Hebrew word used here, *av*, denoting “father,” to their leaders (1 Sam 10:12; 2 Kgs 6:21; 13:14). Elisha’s use of *av* may suggest Elijah was head of the prophets of Yahweh, or it may simply reflect Elisha’s close relationship with Elijah (compare 1 Kgs 20:34; 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:1; 5:22; 6:1).

tore them in two pieces A gesture of grief.

2:14 Elijah’s cloak This seems to be the same cloak Elijah draped on Elisha in 1 Kgs 19:19 to signify his prophetic calling.

and struck the water Some Greek and Latin manuscripts, seeking to explain Elisha’s subsequent questions, add “and it [the waters] did not part.”

it divided See 2 Kings 2:8 and note.

2:15–25 Elisha’s actions in this string of narratives demonstrate that he has the spirit of Elijah (v. 15). While Elisha’s healing of the waters of Jericho (vv. 19–22) attests to the power of the prophetic word to bring life, his cursing of the youths at Bethel (vv. 23–25) attests to the power of the prophetic word to bring death.

2:15 the sons of the prophets See v. 3 and note.

The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha See note on v. 9.

2:16 fifty able men This phrase typically appears in reference to military forces. Here, it may simply indicate that they are able to traverse long distances quickly or refer to their prophetic abilities.

the Spirit of Yahweh This phrase can also be translated “Yahweh’s wind,” since the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*, also denotes wind (compare 1 Kgs 19:11; John 3:5–8).

2:20 a new bowl The Hebrew term here, rendered as “jar” or “flask,” indicates a container distinct from a dish for eating or cooking (see Prov 19:24; 2 Chr 35:13).

2:21 I hereby purify these waters Draws a parallel between Elisha and Moses, who made bitter water sweet by throwing a log into the waters of Marah (Exod 15:23–25).

2:22 until this very day A formula regularly used in etiologies—stories concerned with origins (e.g., 2 Kgs 8:22; 10:27; 16:6; 17:34).

2:23 to Bethel This city was the site of one of Jeroboam’s golden calves and his altar that was torn apart (1 Kgs 12:29, 13) and a location Elisha had visited earlier with Elijah (2 Kgs 2:2–3).

young boys There is no indication in the Hebrew text of the age of the boys; they may have been adolescents.

mocked at him Since Elisha acts so harshly and is at a location where idolatrous worship took place (at least at one point), it's likely that he was condemned for his presence as a prophet.

Go up The Hebrew text here uses the word *alah*, which (ironically) is the same word used for Elijah's ascent to heaven (v. 1).

baldhead Elisha's baldness was most likely natural and not associated with his prophetic office. Uncut hair was the accepted norm among ascetics (those who abstained from pleasure or comfort), as reflected in the Nazirite laws (Num 6:5; Judg 13:5); moreover, the law prohibited cutting hair for ritual purposes (Lev 19:27; 21:5; Deut 14:1). The text's repetition of the same phrase suggests incessant mocking of Elisha's appearance and spiritual status.

2:24 two bears The image of a female bear robbed of her cubs is used several times in the OT to describe an angry or destructive force (2 Sam 17:8; Prov 17:12; Hos 13:8).

2:25 Mount Carmel A peak within the mountain range that extends to the Mediterranean coast at the modern city of Haifa. Mount Carmel was the site of Elijah's confrontation with Ahab and contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18).

to Samaria See note on 2 Kings 1:3.⁶

Acts 13:42-14:7

13:38-44 everyone who believes is justified: Justification is a legal term meaning "declared innocent." It is a legal declaration that a person is acquitted and absolved. It is by justification that a person is righteous and acceptable to God. The death of Christ was the payment of our sin debt, so that we might be forgiven.

13:45 When Luke refers to **the Jews**, he is not speaking of all Jews. The Jews mentioned in v. 43, those who were urging Paul and Barnabas "to continue in the grace of God," honestly wanted to know the truth. The Jews in this verse were the Jewish leaders, those in the positions of religious authority. When the Jewish leaders saw the crowds following Paul, they changed their minds about Paul and became filled with jealousy, especially since many of the people who had gathered were Jews.

13:46-50 judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life: A person who convinces himself that he does not need forgiveness from the Holy One has already condemned himself.

13:51, 52 Jews shook off the dust when they left a Gentile town. These Jews who rejected the gospel were no better off than unbelieving Gentiles.

14:1-5 Following their previously established pattern, Paul and Barnabas went first to the **synagogue of the Jews** which was located in **Iconium**, in the eastern district of **Phrygia**. The text indicates that **a great multitude** (v. 1) of both Jews and Greeks believed. However, the **unbelieving Jews** began to stir up opposition again to the message of the apostles. Since it took a while for the opposition to become effective, Paul and his team were able to remain there preaching for a **long time**. In Luke's typically historical fashion, he does not indicate how long a period of time this actually was, making an exact chronology of Paul's travels almost impossible. Finally, the hostile Jews succeeded in inciting a riot which caused Paul and Barnabas to have to leave Iconium. Verse 3 indicates that the message of the gospel was the **word of His grace** and that their ministry was also accompanied by **signs and wonders**, or miracles.

Why Did John Mark Go Home?

Luke does not tell us why John Mark returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13), giving rise to all kinds of speculation. A few possibilities:

He was young and felt homesick. Possibly, but we don't know exactly how old Mark was. He had been to Antioch (12:25), but otherwise might never have been outside Palestine.

⁶ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (2 Ki). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

He reacted negatively to the interaction with Gentiles. On the first leg of the trip (Cyprus), cultural and ethnic overload may have set in. We know how controversial the inclusion of Gentiles in the church proved to be for believers at Jerusalem (15:1–29). If Mark departed because of prejudice, it might explain Paul's refusal to take him on a later journey (15:37, 38). On the other hand, he had worked with the multiethnic church at Antioch with no apparent problems (12:25).

He didn't want to work with Paul. We know that Paul was a hard charger and that his standards were quite high. Perhaps Mark didn't measure up, or perhaps the relational chemistry didn't work, and so Mark decided to go home rather than endure a lengthy trip with a demanding person. But later Paul was eager to have him on board (2 Tim. 4:11) and included him among his fellow laborers (Philem. 24).

He got seasick. No evidence for that except that Mark left as soon as the party hit the mainland at Perga in Pamphylia. But why return home over seasickness?

He was afraid. In Antioch, Mark met a diverse community of believers who showed extraordinary concern and compassion for each other. But on Cyprus he encountered characters like Elymas the sorcerer (13:6–12) and discovered that in gospel outreach, opponents use live ammunition. So he might have left out of fear.

The pace was too hard. Luke calls Mark an "assistant" (13:5), which probably involved making arrangements for travel, food, and lodging, and possibly some teaching. Again, Paul's pace may have outstripped the young man's capacities, and once they arrived at Perga he decided to throw in the towel. But this is pure speculation.

Scripture doesn't tell us why John Mark made the decision to go home. But the encouraging thing is that his return didn't disqualify him from the faith or diminish his spirituality, no matter how strongly Paul felt about it later (15:38, 39). With time and the encouragement of Barnabas, Mark developed into one of the key leaders of the early church who had a lasting impact on the faith.

14:1–7 Paul and Barnabas **spoke** with authority because they spoke the truth. The power of God is not in the person who witnesses, but in what is witnessed to.

14:8–13 the gods have come down: The Roman poet Ovid told of an ancient legend in which **Zeus** and **Hermes** came to the Phrygian hill country disguised as mortals seeking lodging. After being turned away from a thousand homes, they found refuge in the humble cottage of an elderly couple. In appreciation for the couple's hospitality, the gods transformed the cottage into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns. All the houses of the inhospitable people were then destroyed. This ancient legend may be the reason that the people treated Paul and Barnabas as gods. After witnessing the healing of the cripple, they did not want to make the same mistake as their ancestors.

7

13:42 The Gentiles here were converts to the Jewish religion.

13:46 These are important transitional verses in the narrative. The preaching of the gospel is beginning to turn away from the Jewish community. Paul began his ministry in each new city by entering the synagogue, but rejection by the Jews forced him to preach to Gentile audiences.

13:48 The primary significance of the phrase **appointed to eternal life** is not theological but historical, as Luke traces the spread of the gospel from its Jewish origins to the Gentile world. This reference underscores God's initiative in individual salvation. Throughout the Bible there are references to God's hand of providence influencing people and altering the course of human history. Every Christian, in retrospect, can see how God carefully orchestrated particular events that changed his or her life forever. See Prov. 16:9; Dan. 4:34, 35; Acts 2:22–24; Eph. 1:3–5.

13:51 Shook off the dust is a dramatic symbol of divine abandonment. See Matt. 10:14.

13:52 The tense of the verb **were filled** signifies a continuous filling.

14:3 See section 4 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Acts.⁸

Psalm 139:1–24 You have searched me and known me...Examined my heart and known me

Proverbs 17:19–21

⁷ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (pp. 1395–1397). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

⁸ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Ac 13:17–14:3). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

June 22

2 Kings 3:1-4:17 [4:8-Shummamite woman-miracle pregnancy] S/G

3:1 After Jehoram (1:17) began to reign as Israel's ninth king, **Mesha king of Moab** refused to pay him tribute. Moab was a son of Lot (Gen. 19:37), and his descendants became neighbors of Israel and lived on the eastern border of the Dead Sea. These people had been subjugated by Omri and were paying tribute to the kings of Israel.

3:6 Jehoram mustered the help of **Jehoshaphat king of Judah** and **the king of Edom** to subdue Mesha, but they marched into a barren area with no water. Through the assistance of **Elisha**, the Lord miraculously provided water and gave them victory over the **Moabites**.

3:15 The phrase **the hand of the LORD** was a formula referring to the divine inspiration of the prophets (see Ezek. 1:3). The Spirit of God was the One who enabled the prophets to prophesy (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23; 2 Chr. 12:18; 15:1; 20:14; 24:20). See Introduction to 2 Kings: The Holy Spirit at Work.

3:26 To Mesha, the defeat in battle was a sign that his god Chemosh was angry with Moab. As a result, Mesha offered his own son in a sacrifice to please his god. **Great indignation against Israel** may mean that Mesha's action was so repulsive that the Israelites broke off their attack, or that the battle suddenly went against Israel. Another possibility is that the Israelites ceased their assault because God was displeased with them in some way.

4:1 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 2 Kin.

4:1 Jewish historian Josephus explains that this needy woman was the widow of the prophet Obadiah.

4:2 The **jar of oil** was likely olive oil, used for cooking and for fuel.

4:3 In the ancient Near East, women were regarded as inferior. But this miracle by Elisha demonstrates God's faithful care and provision for the vulnerable and outcast. The provision was in proportion to the woman's faith and ability to receive.

4:8 In his travels **Elisha** frequently passed through **Shunem**, which was located near Jezreel. In contrast to Obadiah's poor widow (vv. 1-7), this Shunammite was a **notable woman** (implying she was very affluent), and she had a husband.

4:10 As God had provided children for Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah, so He miraculously enabled this hospitable woman and her husband to have a son.⁹

Acts 14:8-28

14:14 tore their clothes: The tearing of robes was a Jewish expression of distress and grief. This custom went all the way back to Joshua and Caleb, who tore their clothes after hearing the people of Israel wanted to go back to Egypt instead of entering the Promised Land (Num. 14:6). Later, when the high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, the high priest also tore his own clothes (Matt. 26:65). The tearing of clothes was from the neck down and usually extended about the length of one's hand. The Jews would also do this during times of distress (Josh. 7:6) and especially during seasons of sorrow (2 Sam. 1:11).

14:15-18 The sermon by Paul in these three verses is a condensed version of his sermon on the Areopagus in 17:22-31. These Gentiles did not know or believe in the Scriptures, so Paul preached truths that were self-evident to all and led his listeners to biblical truth.

14:19-22 supposing him to be dead: The physician Luke may be saying that Paul did not die here. However, some believe that the text speaks of Paul's resurrection. We're not sure whether Paul experienced a miracle of healing or a miracle of resurrection.

⁹ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 3:1-4:10). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

14:23, 24 appointed elders: It is difficult to know whether these elders were appointed by Paul and Barnabas or by a vote of the people. However, the process outlined in 6:1–7 for selecting the seven men may provide a clue to the process used for selecting elders here. Both the assembly and the apostles were involved in the selection process. **in every church:** Here is a clear passage presenting a plurality of elders for leadership in each church. This would parallel what we find in Acts 20:17 concerning the plurality of elders in the church at Ephesus.

14:25, 26 the word: The Good News that the Messiah has come to save from sin.

14:27, 28 all that God had done: God’s action in saving **Gentiles** demanded a change in theology and church strategy.

Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible commentary* (pp. 1395–1397). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

14:9 In both the Gospels and Acts faith is often emphasized as the condition of healing (see Matt. 8:10; 9:2, 22, 29; 15:28; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19; Acts 3:16).

14:12 The worship of **Zeus** and **Hermes** (the father and the messenger of the gods and known to the Romans as Jupiter and Mercury) in ancient Lystra has been established by archaeological research.

14:14 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Acts.

WORD WEALTH

14:15 useless, *mataios* (mat-ah-yoss); Strong’s #3152: Fruitless, empty, futile, frivolous, hollow, unreal, unproductive, lacking substance, trifling, ineffectual, void of results, devoid of force, success, or utility, and worthless. The word here describes Greek and Roman mythological ritual. The unregenerate philosophy of that day made Paul and Barnabas urge the people to turn from these useless (*mataios*) things. Their message was “turn from Zeus, who has never lived, to God who has always been alive. As Creator He is worthy to be served, worshiped, and trusted.”

14:19 Many scholars believe that Paul was describing this near death experience in 2 Cor. 12:2-5. It is possible that when Paul **rose up and went into the city**, he was actually raised from the dead. At the very least, he was miraculously healed, because **the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe**.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

14:21 Suffering, Tribulation, CONFLICT AND THE KINGDOM. Paul not only taught the joy and peace of the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:7), its power (1 Cor. 14:20), and its present authority to cause the believer to triumph over evil (2 Tim. 4:8; Rom. 16:20). He also taught that “kingdom people” experience trial, suffering, and not always an “instant victory” (2 Thess. 1:5). Triumph and victory may characterize the attitude of each citizen of the kingdom of God, and Holy Spirit-empowered authority is given to be applied to realize results. Yet, God did not promise life without struggle. The “dominion” being recovered through the presence of the King within us and ministered by the Holy Spirit’s power through us is never taught by the apostles as preempting all suffering.

This text reminds us that victory only comes through battle, and triumph only follows trial. Only a weak view of the truth of the kingdom of God pretends otherwise. Another weak view surrenders to negative circumstances on the proposition that we are predestined to problems and therefore should merely tolerate them. The Bible teaches that suffering, trial, and all order of human difficulty are unavoidable; but God’s Word also teaches they may all be overcome. The presence of the King and the power of His kingdom in our lives make us neither invulnerable nor immune to life’s struggles. But they do bring the promise of victory: provision in need, strength for the day, and healing, comfort, and saving help.

14:22 Enduring sufferings does not earn entrance into the kingdom. The meaning is that persecution accompanies entrance into the kingdom.¹⁰

Psalms 140:1-13. Proverbs 17:22

¹⁰ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Ac 14:9–22). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

June 23

2 Kings 4:18-5:27 [Shunammite woman-death of her son vs 18-37] **S/G**

5:20 Gehazi sins

4:18 It is believed that the Shunammite's son died from inflammation of the brain produced by a sunstroke.

4:24 The actions of both Elisha and the Shunammite woman in this incident provide illustrations of the importance of faith and persistence.

4:39 See section 4 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 2 Kin.

4:40 Death in the pot: The gourds used to make the stew (v. 39) were harmless in small amounts, but in larger dosages they were fatal. Elisha demonstrated the same care for the daily provisions of people as he had witnessed in Elijah (1 Kin. 17:4-6).

4:42 This miracle by Elisha is similar to Jesus' miracle of multiplying the loaves and fish.

4:43 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 2 Kin.

5:1 Apparently the Syrians did not quarantine lepers.

5:2 The young girl here provides a poignant picture of the importance of overcoming the fear of people and pointing others to the Lord.

5:7 Jehoram became alarmed at the request of Naaman and the letter from Ben-Hadad, for it appeared that the Syrians were provoking a fight.

5:8 The story of Naaman provides a parallel to what happens to those who come to Jesus for salvation.

5:18 Rimmon, thought to be a god of rain and thunder, was the local deity of Damascus. Though it was Naaman's responsibility to assist Ben-Hadad in the idolatry of Syria, he sought God's pardon because he recognized that only the Lord was truly God.

5:19 See section 1 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 2 Kin.

5:20 In contrast to Naaman's liberality, Kings records the greed of **Gehazi**.¹¹

Acts 15:1-35 [Salvation=Belief + Circumcision?]

15:1 This section represents a theological milestone in the history of Christianity. All the principal leaders of the early church agreed to meet in Jerusalem to resolve the emerging conflict between legalistic Jewish Christians and Gentile converts to Christianity (vv. 1, 2). The legalists, called Judaizers, believed that in addition to exercising faith in Jesus, one must observe the ceremonial **custom** (v. 1) of the OT, especially the rite of circumcision. Judaizers, then, expected Gentile believers to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses, just as converts to Judaism had been circumcised for generations previously (v. 21). After **much dispute** (v. 7), the Jerusalem Council agreed on what has become the doctrinal foundation of the Christian faith: *salvation is by grace through faith alone* (v. 11). Paul's letter to the Galatians is an extended explanation of this doctrine. See also Rom. 3:28; 2 Cor. 3:7-18; Eph. 2:8, 9; Col. 2:11-17. The clarification of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone also led to a final and formal separation of Christianity from Judaism.

15:1 Paul's report of what had happened among the Gentiles on his first missionary journey (14:26-28) had reached Jerusalem and Judea, so **certain men** came down from Judea to teach the importance of

¹¹ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 4:18–5:20). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

circumcision. They sincerely believed that converts from paganism would weaken the *moral* standards of the church.

15:2 It is not unusual for Christian leaders to disagree strongly. Acts 15 shows how through the Spirit and open dialogue they are able to resolve their differences.

15:7 Peter refers to his ministry in the house of Cornelius (10:1-11:18).

15:10 To add the Law of Moses to faith is to **test God**, because in effect it means that the sacrificial death of Christ was not quite enough to effect salvation (see Gal. 2:21).

WORD WEALTH

15:12 wonders, *teras* (*ter-as*); Strong's #5059: Compare "teratology," the science that deals with unexplainable phenomena. *Teras* denotes extraordinary occurrences, supernatural prodigies, omens, portents, unusual manifestations, miraculous incidents portending the future rather than the past, and acts that are so unusual they cause the observer to marvel or be in awe. *Teras* is always in the plural, associated with *semeion* (signs). Signs and wonders are a perfect balance for touching man's intellect, emotions, and will.

15:12 The irrefutable evidence provided by the demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit played a significant role in bringing the Jerusalem Council to its historic decision. See Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5.

15:14 There is a subtle play on words here. The root of this statement is Deut. 14:2, which declares that God will call a people (Israel) out of "all the peoples who *are* on the face of the earth (the Gentiles)." But James gives new meaning to the long-understood use of these terms. For James, the "people" that God is calling out are Gentiles *in contrast* to Israel.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

15:16 Restoration of David's Tabernacle, RESTORATION. This text prophesies the restoration of the tabernacle of David, a forecast of the global body of Christ united in serving God. The entire concept of "The Holy Spirit and Restoration" is developed in the study article.

15:16 James quotes this OT reference because of its clear prophecy about the salvation of the Gentiles. The rebuilding and restoration of **the tabernacle of David** refers to the building of the church, which in the beginning was composed of Jews, but now included many Gentiles. The church, therefore, is the instrument by which Gentiles may know God. See note on Amos 9:11-15.

15:20 See note on v. 29.

15:22 The Spirit of God brought harmonious agreement among strong-willed leaders in the face of "no small dissension" (v. 2) and "much dispute" (v. 7).

15:23 The salutation of the letter affirms the unity of the leadership of the church.

15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us: An earnest and common desire to know the mind of God leads to unanimity. A church possessing an awareness of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see 10:19, 20; 13:2, 3) need not be unassisted in pursuing its decisions.

15:29 Things offered to idols was meat that had been offered as a sacrifice and was later sold in the market as "used" meat (see 1 Cor. 8). It appears that the early church is substituting three "new" laws for

the “old” laws of Judaism. In view of the clear teaching on grace in this chapter (v. 11), these cannot be seen as requirements for salvation. Instead, they represent a basic separation from glaring paganism and its practices, particularly offensive to Jewish scruples.

15:31 Legalism is always accompanied by fear and bondage; the message of grace is “good news,” and brings liberty and joy.

15:36 The contention (v. 39) between **Paul** and **Barnabas** arose over a difference of opinion concerning the inclusion of **Mark** on the mission team. Paul considered Mark’s departure on the previous journey a desertion (see 13:13). Paul later changed his mind about John Mark (see Col. 4:10). Unfortunately, painful divisions in the body of Christ do occur, but God can turn such things to good. In the case of Paul and Barnabas, there are now *two* missionary teams instead of one (vv. 39, 40). This is the beginning of Paul’s next trip abroad. See map of Paul’s second journey.¹²

Psalm 141:1-10

Proverbs 17:23

¹² Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). [*Spirit filled life study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., Ac 15:1–36). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

June 24

2 Kings 6:1-7:20

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

6:8 The Invisible Realm and Victorious Warfare, FAITH'S WARFARE. To believe the impossible one must first see the invisible—the lesson Elisha taught his servant. The text involves war between Israel and Syria, and the prophet Elisha's informing his people of the enemy's tactics through prophetic insight (v. 12). Here is the lesson: Prayer is the key to discerning our adversary's stratagems. Further, the key to dispelling Elisha's servant's panic was his vision being opened to see the invisible. Note these crucial words: "Elisha prayed"! Elisha did not ask God simply to show the servant another miracle; he asked for his servant to see into another dimension. The answer came immediately: "The LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (v. 17). Seeing into the invisible is a key to victorious praying—discerning spiritual issues from God's perspective rather than man's, seeing the Adversary's attack plan, and perceiving God's angelic strike-force.

6:8 The king of Syria was probably Ben-Hadad II (about 860-841 B.C.).

6:9 Through his prophetic enablement, Elisha would inform Jehoram of Ben-Hadad's strategy. Therefore, Ben-Hadad sent a great army to capture Elisha. That the army **came by night** betrays that the **Syrians** did not really believe in Elisha's power to anticipate their moves. That Ben-Hadad sent a **great army** indicates that the Syrians were not going to take any chances.

6:15 These verses have been a great source of comfort and assurance to believers of all ages. As Rom. 8:31 says, "If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?"

6:21 Such treatment of the enemy demonstrates Israel's confidence in God as their protector and was a move toward establishing peaceful relations between Israel and Syria.

6:24 As Israel persisted in their sinfulness, God raised up **Ben-Hadad** (see note on 1 Kin. 15:18 on the three Ben-Hadads in Scripture) as an adversary to drive them to Himself. The famine that resulted from Ben-Hadad's siege was so severe that Israel resorted to cannibalism, and Jehoram blamed Elisha for their difficulty.

7:1 At the height of the famine described in ch. 6, Elisha prophesied that the Lord would soon end the famine.

7:2 The actions of Jehoram's assistant are a powerful illustration of God's attitude toward unbelief.¹³

Acts 15:36-16:15

[Why was Timothy circumcised?] S/G

Paul/Silas Barnabas/John Mark

Paul & Macedonia

16:1 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Acts.

16:1 Timothy becomes one of Paul's disciples and later is the recipient of 1 and 2 Tim.

¹³ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 5:20–7:2). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

16:3 Paul, the chief spokesman of salvation by grace alone, had the half-Jewish Timothy **circumcised** so that he could take him into the Jewish synagogues. This was not compromise; it was simple Christian courtesy. It was a mature recognition that social, cultural, and even religious differences should never become more important issues than the simple message of salvation in Christ. See 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

Paul Goes to Greece (The Second Missionary Journey, Acts 15:39–18:22). Starting from Jerusalem, Paul took Silas to visit again the churches of Galatia. Young Timothy joined them in Lystra. Then they went to Macedonia and Achaia, present day Greece. On this journey the Philippian jailer was saved, the Bereans “searched the Scriptures daily”(Acts 17:11), and Paul preached at the Areopagus in Athens and then settled in Corinth for a year and a half.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

16:6 Dreams and Visions, LEADER TRAITS. On his missionary journey Paul planned a northward turn into Bithynia. But that night he dreamed of a man begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (v. 9). On the basis of the dream, Paul altered his direction, and thus exemplifies a trait of Holy Spirit-guided leaders. While ungodly leaders consult horoscopes and diviners for direction in their lives, godly leaders hear from God 1) through the written Word, the Bible, and 2) through dreams and visions (2:17). Their thought channels are cleansed of impurity (2 Cor. 10:5). They are not conformed to the pattern of this world but are transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2). Their affections are on things above, not on earthly things (Col. 3:2). Therefore, when the Holy Spirit chooses to speak to them through visions (daytime mind pictures) and dreams (sleeping revelations), they hear clearly (see also Ps. 16:7; Acts 9:10; 10:3, 17; 18:9).

16:7 Luke does not indicate how **the Spirit** communicated His will to the missionaries. It may have been through inner prompting, prophetic utterance, or external circumstances.

16:9 Macedonia is northern Greece, including the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica, to which Paul later addressed three of his epistles.

16:11 This verse begins the “we” sections of Acts, indicating that Luke has joined the mission team and is now giving a firsthand report.

16:13 Since Jewish law required the establishment of a synagogue when there was a population of at least 10 men in a community, the absence of a synagogue in Philippi indicates a small Jewish population.¹⁴

Psalm 142:1-7
Proverbs 17:24-25

¹⁴ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). [Spirit filled life study Bible](#) (electronic ed., Ac 16:1–37). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

June 25

2 Kings 8:1-9:13

[Protection for the Shunnamite woman]

8:7 It was a common practice to consult another's god concerning one's fate. See Ahaziah's request in 1:1, 2. So this is not an indication that Ben-Hadad had turned to the Lord.

8:15 Ben-Hadad was suffocated by **Hazael**.

8:16 Kings now shifts back to the events in the southern kingdom of Judah. During the reign of Jehoram in Israel, another **Jehoram** (see note on 3:1-5) had become **king of Judah**. He was Judah's fifth ruler and, in contrast to his father Jehoshaphat, Jehoram was a wicked king. Jehoram was greatly influenced by his evil wife Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab.

8:25 The sixth king in **Judah** was **Ahaziah** who is not to be confused with the eighth king in Israel. See 1 Kin. 22:51-2 Kin. 1:18. He was also a wicked ruler and, like his father Jehoram, received idolatrous input from Athaliah (see 2 Chr. 22:3).

9:1 Kings turns northward and relates how Elisha commanded that **Jehu** was to be anointed as tenth **king over . . . Israel**.

9:7 As the Lord had destroyed the dynasties of Jeroboam (1 Kin. 14:10), of Baasha (1 Kin. 16:3), and of Zimri (1 Kin. 16:16), so now He would do away with the fourth dynasty of Israel by ending the house of Ahab.

9:10 Jezebel was still alive at this time and was likely the dominant force behind the idolatry in the reigns of Ahaziah and Jehoram.

9:10 Jehu's hasty behavior is understandable when we realize that his anointing and acclamation as king amounted to treason. Therefore it was crucial that he get to Jehoram before the news of the rebellion did. **Ramoth Gilead** (v. 14) was about 50 miles from **Jezreel** (v. 16).¹⁵

Acts 16:16-40

**Paul & Luke & the fortune telling girl(demon possession)
Macedonia jailer**

16:16 The slave girl had a **spirit of divination**, or literally, "a spirit, a python," characterizing her as one inspired by Apollo, the god worshiped at Pytho (Delphi).

16:17 The demon in the slave girl spoke the truth, but mockingly. See Mark 1:24, 25.

16:18 Why Paul delayed to cast out the demon is uncertain. Perhaps he was aware of the peril to which the exorcism would expose the mission team.

16:19 This was Paul's first clash with Roman officials. The new Christian sect was not a threat to the peace of Rome. The charges here were false, and Paul and Silas were completely exonerated by Roman justice (vv. 34-39).

WORD WEALTH

16:24 charge, *parangelia* (par-ang-gel-ee-ah); Strong's #3852: A chain-of-command word, denoting a general order, instruction, command, precept, or direction. It is used in a way that makes the word self-explanatory. The prison authorities charge the jailer to imprison Paul and Silas (v. 24). The apostles were given a charge not to preach by the authorities at Jerusalem

¹⁵ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 8:7-9:10). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

(5:28). Paul gives a charge to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:2). *Parangelia* is the charge Paul gave to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:5, 18).

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

16:25 Praise Springs Open Prison Doors, PRAISE PATHWAY. Study this example of the power of praise, even in difficult circumstances. Beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas respond by singing a hymn of praise—a song sung directly from the heart to God. The relationship between their song of praise and their supernatural deliverance through the earthquake cannot be overlooked. Praise directed toward God can shake open prison doors! A man was converted, his household saved, and satanic captivity overthrown in Philippi. Today, as well, praise will cause every chain of bondage to drop away. When you are serving God and things do not go the way you planned, learn from this text. Praise triumphs gloriously!

16:25 Paul and Silas rejoiced in the face of their terrible circumstances. As he later wrote back to the church he had planted in this very city of Philippi, Paul commanded from another prison cell, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4).

16:26 This is the power of praise in action, although it must be remembered that Paul was in prison at other times and this kind of spectacular event did *not* occur.

16:30 Luke was not only recording an important moment in early church history; he was recording a universal question and the precise answer to that question. **You and your household** suggests that God works in family units (see Ex. 12:3).

16:37 This is the first of several instances where Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship. A relatively small proportion of the population of the Roman Empire held citizenship, a rare and valuable status (22:27, 28); and Roman law guaranteed the legal rights of its official citizens, including the right to a fair trial (22:25, 26; 25:16). Paul’s insistence on fair treatment is to turn the tables on the lies of his accusers (v. 21).¹⁶

PHILIPPIAN SLAVE GIRL Philippian slave girl (Acts 16:16–19). A young woman possessed by a spirit of divination who brings in much of her owners’ wealth. After Paul exorcises the spirit, the owners bring him and Silas before Philippi’s magistrates, who order the missionaries to be beaten and jailed.

Overview

In Acts 16:16 the Philippian slave girl is referred to as *παιδίσκην* (*paidiskēn*), a diminutive of *παῖς* (*pais*), meaning “female slave” (*BDAG*, 749). The word often referred to the female slave in a Roman household (Mark 14:66; Acts 12:13). This slave girl is described as having a “python spirit” (*πνεῦμα πύθωνα*, *pneuma pythōna*) or “the spirit of a python.”

According to Greek mythology, “python” refers to the snake or dragon that guarded a shaft at Delphi and was destroyed by Apollo (Strabo, *Geography*, 9.3.12; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 586; Klauck, *Magic*, 65). This creature later became associated with soothsaying, divination, or even ventriloquism (Acts 13:6; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 586; Bock, *Acts*, 535). People often brought inquiries to female seers at Delphi who entered the temple of Apollo and divined answers by the power of this spirit (Klauck, *Magic*, 65).

¹⁶ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). [Spirit filled life study Bible](#) (electronic ed., Ac 16:1–37). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

This “python spirit” is later clarified as referring to fortune-telling (μαντευομένη, *manteuomenē*), an ability that brought the slave girl’s masters much wealth (Acts 16:16, 19; Harrill, “Slavery,” 1126). The slave girl harasses the apostle Paul and his coworkers for several days, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved” (Acts 16:17 NIV). Finally, Paul becomes so “burdened,” or disturbed (διαπονέομαι, *diaponeomai*; *BDAG*, 235) by the girl that he abruptly casts out the spirit in the name of Jesus (Acts 16:18). The slave girl is freed from the spirit at once. Paul’s actions lead to persecution and eventual imprisonment for him and Silas (Acts 16:19–24).

Thematic Importance

The encounter with the slave girl raises two important themes regarding the advance of the gospel in Acts:

1. Magic or the demonic influence behind it presents an obstacle to the gospel. This theme also occurs with Simon the Magician (Acts 8:9–24) and in Paul’s interaction with Bar-Jesus in Paphos of Cyprus (Acts 13:6). Magic was practiced by both Greeks and Jews.
2. The motive for profit often threatens to impede the gospel. This also is seen with Simon the Magician (Acts 8:9–24) and with Demetrius (Acts 19:24–28).

Peterson notes that “Luke is turning the tables on those who accused Christians falsely and demonstrating the defeat of the devil and the victory of Jesus Christ. He is also demonstrating the power of the gospel to liberate people from the oppression imposed by magical beliefs and practices.” (Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 92).

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Psalm 143:1-12

Proverbs 17:26

¹⁷ Guyer, M. S. (2016). [Philippian Slave Girl](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

June 26

2 Kings 9:14-10:31

[Jehu-Almost completely dedicated] What is almost then? And today?

9:1 Kings turns northward and relates how Elisha commanded that **Jehu** was to be anointed as tenth **king over . . . Israel**.

9:7 As the Lord had destroyed the dynasties of Jeroboam (1 Kin. 14:10), of Baasha (1 Kin. 16:3), and of Zimri (1 Kin. 16:16), so now He would do away with the fourth dynasty of Israel by ending the house of Ahab.

9:10 Jezebel was still alive at this time and was likely the dominant force behind the idolatry in the reigns of Ahaziah and Jehoram.

9:10 Jehu's hasty behavior is understandable when we realize that his anointing and acclamation as king amounted to treason. Therefore it was crucial that he get to Jehoram before the news of the rebellion did. **Ramoth Gilead** (v. 14) was about 50 miles from **Jezebel** (v. 16).

9:21 Jehu proceeded to initiate the task the Lord had assigned him (vv. 7-10) by executing Jehoram and Jezebel. This fulfilled part of the prophecy that he and his captain Bidkar had heard from Elijah in 1 Kin. 21:17-26. At this time Jehu also executed Ahaziah the king of Judah (vv. 27-29).¹⁸

10:1 Jehu promptly sets out to accomplish God's directive to do away with the house of Ahab (9:7). He executed Ahab's **seventy sons** (his descendants in Samaria), then he killed Ahaziah's forty-two **brothers** (relatives), and finally he exterminated the rest of Ahab's family in Samaria (v. 17). All of this was to avenge the evil done by the fourth dynasty (9:7) and to fulfill Elijah's prophecy. Compare v. 10 with 1 Kin. 21:17-26. Jehu's final strategy was to destroy Baal worship in Israel by trapping and executing the worshipers of Baal and burning their temple (vv. 18-28). His helper **Jehonadab** (vv. 15, 23) is noted in Jer. 35:6.

10:28 See section 2 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 2 Kin.

10:29 Jehu is to be commended for purging Israel of the house of Ahab and its Baal worship. For this, his dynasty would last four generations. Indeed, this fifth dynasty was the longest and most stable of all of Israel's dynasties. However, because Jehu was not fully devoted to the Lord, God disciplined him with territorial losses to Hazael of Syria.¹⁹

Acts 17:1-34

17:2 Paul usually began his ministry in a new city by going into the Jewish synagogue, which offered a relatively open forum for Jews to teach and address current issues. Even though Paul was persecuted by his brethren, the Jews, he never lost his burden for their souls (see Rom. 9:1-5).

WORD WEALTH

17:3 **suffer**, *pascho* (*pas-kho*); Strong's #3958: Compare "passion," "passive," "pathos." Being acted upon in a certain way, to experience ill-treatment, roughness, violence, or outrage, to endure suffering, and to undergo evils from without. *Pascho* asks the painful question, "What is happening to me?" Of the 42 times it appears, it is mostly used of Christ's suffering for us.

¹⁸ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 9:1-21). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁹ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 2 Ki 10:1-29). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

17:11 These Jews did not have closed minds; **they received the word with all readiness.** Nor were they glibble; they **searched the Scriptures daily.**

WORD WEALTH

17:18 babbler, *spermologos* (sper-mol-og-oss); Strong's #4691: Athenian slang for: 1) a bird that picks up seeds; 2) men lounging around the marketplace, making a living by picking up whatever falls from the loads of merchandise; 3) a babbler, chatterer, or gossip retailing bits and pieces of misinformation; 4) a pseudo-intellectual who insists on spouting off. Tragically, the super-intellectuals on Mars' Hill failed to see in Paul all the necessary ingredients for being a truth bringer.

17:18 The people of the Roman Empire were characterized by a great diversity of religious belief. Epicureanism (seeking tranquility as the highest good) and Stoicism (being free from passion and passively accepting everything in life as inevitable, impersonal fate) were popular philosophies. Polytheism (the belief in multiple gods) was rampant: "The city was given over to idols" (v. 16). These philosophers actually thought that Paul was propagating a religion of two new gods: **Jesus and the resurrection.** Others, however, accused Paul of being a **babblers.** The word originally described one who picked up scraps in the marketplace. Later, it designated one who picked up scraps of learning here and there and peddled them.

17:19 The **Areopagus**, or "Hill of Ares" (Roman, "of Mars"), was an open forum for philosophical debate, and was located southwest of the Parthenon on the Acropolis.

17:22 Athens was the religious center of the Greco-Roman world. There were more statues of gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together. The phrase **very religious** is not a compliment, but a statement of fact. It could be understood as "somewhat superstitious."

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

17:23 1. What Is God Like?, SPIRITUAL ANSWERS. For the answer to this and other probing questions about God and the power life in His kingdom, see the study article "Spiritual Answers to Hard Questions."

17:23 In spite of their religiosity, the Athenians were ignorant of the true God.

17:24 Paul did not quote from the Hebrew Scriptures, which were unfamiliar to his Greek audience. For reasons Luke does not explain, results here were meager (v. 34)—no baptisms, no new church, and no letter to the Athenians in the NT—in contrast to other places where the power of God was the front line of his ministry.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

17:26 The Unity of the Human Race, HUMAN WORTH. Here the unity of the human race is clearly stated, for through Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20), and then the sons of Noah (Gen. 9:19), all races and nationalities of men came forth. We all proceed from one blood, both figuratively and literally, for the same blood types are found in all races. Humankind is a universal family. "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10). We live in a single world community. No race or nation has the right to look down on or disassociate itself from another. The apostle Peter said, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean . . . In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:28, 34, 35). There are

only two divisions of humankind: the saved and the unsaved. Other differences are merely skin deep or culturally flavored, but all people are relatives.

17:32 To the Greeks the idea of the resurrection of the dead was ridiculous, because they believed that death was a release of the soul from the prison of the body.²⁰

Psalm 144:1-15

Proverbs 17:27-28

²⁰ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). [*Spirit filled life study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., Ac 17:2–32). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Philippi in the Bible

Book of Acts

The book of Acts describes Philippi as an important city (πόλις, *polis*) and colony (κολωνία, *kolōnia*). Although many translations of Acts 16:12 describe Philippi as “the leading city of the district of Macedonia,” recent scholarship has favored the suggested reading of “a city of the first district of Macedonia” (UBS 4 / NA 27; Hemer, *Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 113–14).

Paul’s Arrival in Philippi. Around the year AD 49 or 50 (during the reign of Claudius), the Apostle Paul and his companions traveled to Philippi. According to Acts, while Paul was staying there he received a vision of a Macedonian man summoning him to come (Acts 16:8–10). Paul passed over the Aegean to Neapolis (modern Kavala), and journeyed from there to Philippi, where he established his first church on European soil. According to Acts 16, Paul initially attended a prayer meeting along the river bank. Three locations hold claim to this spot (McRay, *Archaeology*, 286–87):

1. the Gangites river bank about 1.9 miles west of the forum
2. the Krenides stream near the Krenides Gate
3. a stream bed immediately outside the Neapolis Gate

Paul’s Ministry. Acts tells that during Paul’s ministry in Philippi, he exorcised a demon from a slave girl, which angered the slave’s owners. The opponents charged that Jews were troubling the city by teaching customs unlawful for Romans to observe (Acts 16:20–21). The city magistrates had Paul and Silas beaten, then turned them over to the jailer. Paul probably stood trial on the tribunal (*bema*) or speaker’s platform on the north side of the forum (McRay, *Archaeology*, 285). After the magistrates learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, they asked him to leave town (Acts 16:38–40).

Paul’s Church Plant. Paul’s church plant gained early converts such as Lydia (a woman of Thyatiran descent and seller of purple dyes), the Philippian jailer, and the jailer’s household. The fledgling congregation met in the house of Lydia, a God-fearing Gentile.

After leaving Philippi, Paul journeyed on to Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 17:1–15). Paul visited Philippi at least once more (Acts 20:1–6; 1 Cor 16:5–6; 2 Cor 2:13; 7:5).

Letter to the Philippians

While in prison, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippian congregation with its overseers and deacons (Phil 1:1–26). The Letter to the Philippians is a warm, personal letter and reflects the deep affection the apostle had for the congregation (Phil 1:3–5; 4:1). Scholars debate whether Paul wrote the letter from an Ephesian, Caesarean, or Roman prison. If written from Rome (the common, traditional view), Paul would have composed the letter around AD 61–62.

Because Philippi was a Roman colony, its residents often emphasized their Roman loyalties and privileges. The book of Philippians is Paul’s only letter that uses the language of civil or political identity. In Philippians 1:27, Paul exhorts the recipients to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (πολιτεύεσθε, *politeuesthe*, “to live as a citizen”), and in Phil 3:20 he reminds them that their “citizenship” (πολίτευμα, *politeuma*) is in heaven. The letter exudes Paul’s joy, repeatedly encourages the Philippians toward unity, warns them of false teaching, and thanks them for their financial support.

Tensions and hardships mirrored within the letter may reflect social tensions and economic difficulties within the larger community of Philippi (see De Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*; Oakes, *Philippians*). Paul specifically called upon Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony, and he summoned the assistance of Clement (Phil 4:2–3). The apostle affirms that the women labored with him in spreading the gospel (see Abrahamsen, “Women at Philippi”). Epaphroditus also seems to have come from Philippi (Phil 2:25–30; 4:18).

From Paul’s letters, we learn that the Macedonians supported him in ministry and took part in his fundraising for the believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1–2; 11:9). Although he had been

shamefully treated in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2; Acts 16:19–24), he continued to see the fruit of his ministry in the city.

Philippi in the Post-Apostolic Era

In the first part of the second century, Ignatius of Antioch passed through Philippi while being transported to martyrdom in Rome. After his departure, the Philippian church sent a letter to Polycarp of Smyrna. Polycarp replied with his own *Epistle to the Philippians*. The letter discusses the theme of “righteousness,” addresses the case of a fallen elder named Valens, exhorts the recipients toward forgiveness, and warns of false teaching. Polycarp also sent along any Ignatian letters he had in his possession, as the Philippians had requested. Polycarp addressed the elders and deacons, as well as exhorting the widows and various other congregational groups. He praised the Philippians for their firm faith and for their loving assistance of Ignatius.

Extrabiblical Evidence

A number of classical authors mention Philippi, including:

- Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 16.3.7; 16.8.6; 51.4.6
- Strabo, *Geography* 7.34–36, 41
- Pliny, *Natural History* 4.42
- Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 47.35–49
- Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.102–138
- Plutarch, *Brutus* 38–53.

Other instances can be found in Velleius Paterculus, Lucian, Tacitus, and Josephus (see Bormann, *Philippi*, 68–84). Pausanias called Philippi “the youngest city in Macedonia” (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.10).

Archaeology

Archaeological work in Philippi has uncovered a Roman forum, Roman baths, temples, and the remnants of several Christian churches (Bakirtzis and Koester, *Philippi*, 37–48). Four basilicas have been identified. Paul and Silas may have been imprisoned in a Roman dungeon just west of “Basilica A,” although this attribution remains debated (McRay, *Archaeology*, 288). Scholars have also identified fifth and sixth century tombs of both Christians and pagans (Pelekanidis, “Philippi and Its Christian Monuments”). Archaeologists have discovered seven churches, perhaps dating from the fourth to seventh centuries. Earthquakes in the sixth and seventh centuries damaged a basilica outside the walls, and the surrounding area apparently served as a Christian cemetery in the 10th and 11th centuries (Pelekanidis, “Extramural Early Christian Basilica”).

Other discovered remains include:

- portions of the Neapolis Gate.
- a theater that was renovated for gladiatorial contests. It dates from the time of Philip II, and the Romans seemingly enlarged it in the second century AD.
- the Acropolis site, which indicates occupation stretching from the Macedonian to the Byzantine periods
- including rock-cut reliefs of the goddess Diana.
- a richly-adorned sanctuary dedicated to the gods Isis and Serapis.

Numerous artifacts such as inscriptions, reliefs, and votive carvings indicate Philippi had a thriving and pluralistic society.

Little is known about Philippi in the middle of the first century, when Paul and his companions arrived there (Bakirtzis and Koester, *Philippi*, 14). Nevertheless, although most of the archaeological

remains come from later centuries, some do derive from the first and second centuries AD. Archaeological remains from the Antonine era include:

- a public speaking rostrum flanked by two monuments and fountains
- a large rectangular forum
- a palaestra (including an exercise field, amphitheatre, and latrine complex)
- stoa porticoes
- a city library
- various other buildings
- street pavement and drainage.

Workers apparently repaired the Via Egnatia during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Additional building projects, likely under Marcus Aurelius, further enhanced the city.

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Shunem. Village of Issachar's tribe (Jos 19:18) strategically located in the Jezreel Valley. Shunem (modern Sulem) is about three-and-a-half miles north of Jezreel, situated on the outer hills of Mt Moreh. Both Shunem and Jezreel guard the eastern approach to the Jezreel Valley from Beth-shan through the Valley of Harod. This strategic location explains the appearance of Shunem on city lists of various foreign invaders: Thutmose III (15 century BC); the Amarna letters (15 century BC) which mention it in conjunction with Megiddo; and the 10th-century record at Karnak of the Egyptian Shishak who listed Shunem's importance. Preliminary archaeological surveys of the site evidence occupation from the Middle Bronze Age to the Islamic era.

The Philistines used Shunem to launch their siege of the Israelite forces at Jezreel (1 Sm 28–31). Because Shunem was on a well-used route, Elijah frequented the town and even resided there (2 Kgs 4:8). Later Elijah raised a woman's son from death (vv 32–37). During the latter years of the reign of David a beautiful woman from Shunem named Abishag was summoned to care for the ailing king (1 Kgs 1:3, 15). After David's death Abishag appears in the story of the rivalry between

²¹ Hartog, P. A. (2016). *Philippi*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Adonijah (David's eldest son) and Solomon. Adonijah requests Abishag for his own once Solomon gains the throne, but the king views his brother's interest as presumption—and a possible attempt at his throne (2:13–25).²²

SHUNEM—two resting-places, a little village in the tribe of Issachar, to the north of Jezreel and south of Mount Gilboa (Josh. 19:18), where the Philistines encamped when they came against Saul (1 Sam. 28:4), and where Elisha was hospitably entertained by a rich woman of the place. On the sudden death of this woman's son she hastened to Carmel, 20 miles distant across the plain, to tell Elisha, and to bring him with her to Shunem. There, in the "prophet's chamber," the dead child lay; and Elisha entering it, shut the door and prayed earnestly: and the boy was restored to life (2 Kings 4:8–37). This woman afterwards retired during the famine to the low land of the Philistines; and on returning a few years afterwards, found her house and fields in the possession of a stranger. She appealed to the king at Samaria, and had them in a somewhat remarkable manner restored to her (comp. 2 Kings 8:1–6).²³

4:8 Shunem, a city in central Israel, was apparently located on a main thoroughfare from north to south. This woman was part of a minority in Israel faithful to God and still observing some of the old festivals (v. 23).

A Shunammite Woman

A "notable woman" and her elderly husband lived in the town of Shunem in southern Galilee southeast of Mt. Carmel. Their gracious home became a frequent way station for the prophet Elisha during his journeys throughout the countryside. Such hospitality to strangers in both Old and New Testaments was not optional (Gen. 18:1–8; Deut. 10:17–19; Matt. 25:35; Heb. 13:2).

Eventually, the Shunammite woman decided to provide a more comfortable place for the prophet, a permanent, enclosed structure accessible by an outer stairway. Such accommodations were invaluable in a day when public lodging was very poor, if available at all.

Elisha wished to do something in return for her gracious hospitality, though she had asked nothing. The observant servant Gehazi reminded Elisha that the Shunammite had no children, and infertility was a personal tragedy for an Israelite woman. Elisha announced to her that next year she would hold a son in her arms. She must have been stunned because she and her husband were old (see Luke 18:27). In later years, the child fell ill while working with his father in the fields, he died in his mother's lap.

In silent grief she laid the boy on Elisha's bed and closed the door. With urgent determination she sought the prophet. Did she question why God had given her a child, only to take him away from her? Was her swift determination to find Elisha the response of faith that the God who used His prophet to promise her a child could also use His prophet to restore the child's life?

She found Elisha and fell at his feet. Seeing her anguish, Elisha quickly ascertained that something was the matter with the boy. He asked Gehazi to go and lay

²² Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Shunem](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1959). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

²³ Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Easton's Bible dictionary](#). New York: Harper & Brothers.

his prophet's staff on the boy's face, but the Shunammite refused to leave Elisha; together they began the journey back to Shunem. The mother waited anxiously outside the prophet's room—hoping, fearing, wondering. Meanwhile, Elisha prayed and the boy revived.

Imagine the woman's elation at seeing her son, the child of promise, restored to life. While her actions clearly indicated she knew such a miracle was possible, the overwhelming joy at holding her child as he ran into her arms was indescribable.

The woman's gracious provision for the Lord's prophet resulted in the coming of a precious son into her life (see Prov. 11:25). Though some consider namelessness as merely the absence of power, we see in this humble woman the reward for a servant's heart—power with God and gratitude from His prophet. Her inward beauty (servant's heart) prompted outward duty (hospitality); Elisha's inward virtue (gratitude) unfolded in outward deeds (gift of a son). The Shunammite's unsolicited hospitality awakened Elisha's thoughtful gratitude. Her pro-active faith and confident determination in the midst of grief resulted in the restoration of her son's life.

See also 2 Kin. 8:1–6; notes on Children (2 Sam. 21); Hospitality (1 Pet. 4)

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A SON FOR THE “GREAT WOMAN” OF SHUNEM

This gracious woman, living in Shunem, entertained Elisha whenever he passed through her town.

And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither [2 Kings 4:9–10].

Since then, there have been many believers who have in their homes what they call the “prophet's chamber.” As I have traveled about from place to place, holding Bible conferences, I've stayed in many prophet's chambers. I could tell you about people all across this country today, wonderful Christian folk, who have a room where preachers and missionaries are entertained and feel at home. You do not know what that means in the lives of many of God's people today.

Now Elisha appreciated this home that was always open to him. Lying on the bed one day, he determined to somehow reward this thoughtful woman for her kindness. Elisha summons his servant Gehazi:

And he said, What then is to be done for her? and Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life [2 Kings 4:14–17].

LIFE RESTORED TO THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON

²⁴ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (2 Ki 4:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Years later when her son was a grown child, he died. Elisha restored him to life, using the same method that Elijah had used (1 Kings 17); that is, personal contact with the dead child which brought life. The great principle here is that when we are dead in trespasses and sins, personal contact with Jesus Christ brings life. In Him we have life. He *is* life²⁵

THE NOTABLE WOMAN OF SHUNEM

Scripture references: *2 Kings 4:8–37; 8:1–6*

The third unnamed woman in Kings is not a widow but a childless wife. She was “notable”—that is, a respected member of her community. As Elisha the prophet often passed by her home, this woman had her husband prepare a special room where Elisha could stay for the night.

Later, when Elisha asked the woman what he could do for her, she had no request. But Elisha’s servant Gehazi observed that the woman was childless, and that her husband was old. So Elisha promised the woman a son. The child was born as Elisha had promised, but some time later the boy suffered sunstroke and died. The woman immediately set out to get Elisha. Elisha came and prayed for the child, who was restored to life.

Later Elisha warned the woman and her son of a coming seven-year famine, and told her to leave. She moved to the land of Philistines during the famine. When the famine was over, the woman returned to Israel and sought the return of her property. It happened that when the woman reached the palace, the king was listening to stories about Elisha’s miracles, told by Elisha’s former servant. When the Shunammite woman arrived, Elisha’s servant recognized her and identified her and her son! Impressed, the king ordered that her lands be restored.

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN: A CLOSE-UP

While much of the story in 2 Kings is narrative, three revealing quotes provide insight into this “notable woman.”

The first quote (*2 Kin. 4:13*). When asked by Elisha what he could do for her, the woman responded simply, “I dwell among my own people.” She was saying that she was content: she had found her place, and was reconciled to her situation.

The second quote (*2 Kin. 4:16*). When Elisha announced that she would have a son, the woman responded, “No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!”

The reaction seems strange at first until we link it to her first statement. It wasn’t that she didn’t want a son, but she had determined to be satisfied with what life had provided. She feared she would make herself miserable if she hoped for what she thought she could not have. For those who have tried to insulate themselves from hurt by determining not to dream, the sudden introduction of hope can be frightening.

The third quote (*2 Kin. 4:28*). After her son died the woman hurried to Elisha. When she found him her words reflect the deep distress she felt: “Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?”

The Shunammite had resolved to live a life marked by the rejection of hope until Elisha appeared and gave her hope despite herself. Her hope had borne fruit: she had a son. But now the son was dead, and in her dark despair it seemed preferable to have lived the empty, hopeless life she had known before the boy was conceived than to experience the pain that now tore at her inmost being.

But the woman’s story doesn’t end there. Elisha’s God restored the child to life and to his mother’s arms. And the woman learned an important lesson about life.

What was the lesson? Simply that the logic of abandonment is wrong. We may, like the Shunammite, reason, “If I want nothing, I cannot suffer from its lack. If I have nothing, I cannot be hurt by its loss.” Such

²⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 2, pp. 309–310). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

a life is stark and empty. God invites us to live in hope and expectation rather than in resignation. While it is true that living in hope may bring us unexpected pain and that every gain brings with it the possibility of loss, the God who guards and guides us is gracious indeed. In opening our lives to whatever the future may bring, whatever pain we know will be more than balanced by His joy.

THE SHUNAMMITE: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

- Non-believers may dismiss the woman's appearance at the exact moment Elisha's former servant was telling the king about her as a coincidence. But we are not to lose sight of the fact that we have a wonderful God who exercises sovereign control. Even now He is weaving many "coincidences" into the fabric of our lives.
- We seem to have forgotten that hospitality is a spiritual gift. The woman of Shunem practiced this gift, and she was greatly blessed because she did.²⁶

E. The Miraculous Ministry of Elisha (4:1–8:15)

1. *Miraculous Provision of Oil (4:1–7)*

An impoverished widow of one of **the** godly **prophets** was in danger of losing her sons to slavery because of unpaid debts. She was miraculously supplied with **oil**, the only limit being the number of **vessels** she could borrow to receive it. By selling **the oil** she was able to **pay** her **debt** and support her family. This event illustrates grace for the debtor, enough to meet present needs and to provide for future sustenance. God's grace to needy sinners sets us free from debt and slavery and provides all we need for a new life.

2. *Miraculous Birth (4:8–17)*

A prominent **woman** of **Shunem** had shown unusual hospitality to **Elisha**, even fitting out a **small upper room** for him in her home. When she was offered a position or favor from **the king** through Elisha's intercession, she humbly expressed her satisfaction at dwelling simply **among** her **own people**. **Gehazi**, the **servant** of the prophet, suggested that she might like a **son**, and this suggestion became a reality at the word of the prophet. The following spring she bore a **son**. Out of death (the barren womb) the Lord brought life, a picture of the spiritual birth of every child of God (Eph. 2:1–10).

3. *Raising the Shunammite's Son (4:18–37)*

4:18–25a Years later the lad suffered a stroke of some kind while out in the field. He was carried back **to his mother** and **died** in her arms at **noon**. She put his body in the prophet's chamber. **Then**, without revealing the reason, she told **her husband** that she wanted to visit **the man of God** on **Mount Carmel**. He thought it strange to visit the prophet when it was not a religious holiday, but he made the necessary arrangements for transportation. With great speed she rode from Shunem, in the plain of Esdraelon, to Mount Carmel.

4:25b–28 Seeing her approach, Elisha sent **Gehazi** to **meet her** and to inquire as to her welfare. She did not tell Gehazi the purpose of her visit. In fact, she deceived him by saying that all was **well** with herself, her **husband**, and her **son**. She preferred to present her case directly to the prophet. The woman met Elisha with an emotional outburst and would have been dismissed by **Gehazi** if the prophet had not sensed her **deep distress** and permitted her to speak. **The LORD** had **not** revealed to Elisha the purpose of her visit,

²⁶ Richards, S. P., & Richards, L. (1999). *Every woman in the Bible* (pp. 142–143). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

and neither did she. But she gave a hint when she said, “**Did I ask a son of my lord?** Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?” In other words, “I do not want to be deceived by being given a son and then having him taken away from me.” Perhaps Elisha surmised from this that the son was seriously ill.

4:29–31 At first the prophet sent **Gehazi** to **lay his staff on the dead child**, telling him to avoid the usual prolonged Eastern greetings en route. The woman sensed that this would not do and insisted that Elisha himself return with her. As they approached Shunem, **Gehazi** met them with the news that the lad had **not awakened**.

4:32–37 Elisha then went **into** the room where the body lay, closed **the door, prayed, and stretched himself out on the child—mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands**. The prophet got up, **walked back and forth**, and then **stretched himself out on** the boy again. This time the lad **sneezed seven times and ... opened his eyes**. The thankful mother received her son back to life again. In raising the child, Elisha fully identified with the dead youth: mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. His staff had effected no change, but when he put himself on the boy and breathed his own life into him, the lad came alive.²⁷

²⁷ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 394–395). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Chapter 65
THE SPIRIT GIFTING

The doctrine of spiritual gifts is almost exclusively a Pauline doctrine, the only use of the word outside of Paul being in 1 Peter 4:10. The major passage in Ephesians 4 attributes the giving of gifts to the risen and ascended Christ. The major passage in 1 Corinthians 12 emphasizes the Spirit's work as the One who gives gifts. The other principal passage, Romans 12, leaves the Agent unspecified. Since we only mentioned briefly the ministry of Christ in relation to giving gifts to His body under Christology, we will look at the doctrine in detail here.

I. THE DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. What is Meant

The word for spiritual gifts (*charisma*), obviously related to the word for grace, means something that is due to the grace of God. The use of the word in the New Testament ranges from the gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23), to the gift of God's providential care (2 Cor. 1:11), to the most frequent use in relation to gifts of grace to the believer. When used in this latter relationship I suggest that a spiritual gift is a God-given ability for service.

In this proposed definition the synonym for gift is ability. A spiritual gift is an ability. "God-given" reminds us that Christ and the Spirit are the givers of gifts, and "for service" seeks to capture the emphasis in the central passages that gifts are to be used in serving the body of Christ. Though there exists a close analogy between spiritual gifts and talents (certainly both are God-given, 1 Cor. 4:7), talents may or may not be used for serving the body.

B. What is Not Meant

1. *A spiritual gift is not a place of service.* The gift is the ability, not where that ability is used. Teaching can be done in or out of a formal classroom situation and in any country of the world. Helping can be done in the church or in the neighborhood.

2. *A spiritual gift is not an office.* The gift is the ability and can be exercised whether one holds an office in a local church or not. In this regard much confusion exists over the gift of pastor. The gift is the ability to shepherd people. This can be done by the person who occupies what we call, in our modern ecclesiology, the office of the pastorate. Or it can be done, say, by a dean of men or a dean of women in a school. Or it can be done by the wife and mother in a home.

3. *A spiritual gift is not a particular age group ministry.* There is no gift of youth work or children's work. All ages need to be served by pastors, teachers, administrators, helpers, etc.

4. *A spiritual gift is not a specialty technique.* There is no spiritual gift of writing or Christian education or music. These are techniques through which spiritual gifts may be channeled.

5. *A spiritual gift is different from a natural talent.* I have already mentioned that a talent may or may not serve the body of Christ, while a spiritual gift does. Let's notice some further contrasts between spiritual gifts and natural talents.

NATURAL TALENTS

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Given by God through our parents

Given by God independent of parents

Given at birth

Evidently given at conversion

To benefit mankind generally

To benefit the body particularly

Thus a spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve the body of Christ wherever and however He may direct.

II. THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. They are Distributed by the Risen, Ascended Christ (Eph. 4:11)

The fact that the Head of the body gives gifts to His body raises the use of gifts to a high and holy level. These are His gifts, entrusted to us because He needs us to use them in order to build up His body. What dignity this gives even to what may seem to be the lowliest kind of service!

B. They are Distributed by the Holy Spirit at Will (1 Cor. 12:11, 18)

Why does He give a believer a specific gift? Because He knows best what is needed by the body and what best fits each believer for service. If we would believe that, it would keep us from complaining that we are not like someone else, and it ought to motivate us to use to the fullest what God has given us.

When does the Spirit give us our gifts? Most likely at conversion. If these are gifts of the Spirit, and if we do not possess the Spirit until conversion, then it seems that His gifts would be given at that time. We may not discover all the gifts given at salvation, but I am inclined to believe that we have them all at that time. As we grow, other gifts may come to light to use at different times in our life, but likely we possess them all from conversion. Probably we cannot say what particular combination of gifts we have until we can look back over our lives and see what ones God used through all of our days.

C. They are Distributed to All Believers

No believer is without at least one spiritual gift. Peter made it clear that all have at least one (1 Pet. 4:10). Every believer is either single or married, and both states are said to be spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 7:7). Possibly many believers also have the gift of helps or serving.

But no believer has all the gifts. If they did, then the metaphor in 1 Cor. 12:12–27 would be meaningless. If any believer possessed all the gifts then he or she would have no need for other believers. He would be the hand and foot and eye and ear—the whole body—which is impossible. Believers need other believers simply because no believer possesses all the gifts.

D. They are Distributed to the Body of Christ as a Whole

By this I mean to emphasize that not every congregation need expect that it will have all the gifts represented in it. The state of growth and maturity may not require this. God knows what each group needs and will see that it is supplied accordingly.

I mean too that not every generation may necessarily expect to have all the gifts. A gift given once is a gift given to the whole body of Christ. God gave the foundation gifts of apostles and prophets at the beginning (Eph. 2:20). After the foundation was laid by those who used those gifts, other gifts were needed. But in the twentieth century we are still benefiting from and building on those foundational gifts. They were given in the first century to the whole body in all centuries. No generation has been slighted. The Spirit endows the church as He wills, and He knows exactly what each believer, each congregation, and each generation needs.

III. THE DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The “peril of the pendulum” operates in relation to spiritual gifts. On the one swing of the pendulum is the idea that spiritual gifts are essentially irrelevant to Christian service today because the gifts were given to the early church only and the important matter today is maturity, not gifts. On the opposite swing is the emphasis that you cannot even begin to serve unless you are sure of your spiritual gift(s). If spiritual gifts were given to the early church only or are irrelevant to service today, then why do they appear in New Testament books written to the second generation of believers and to those who lived throughout the Roman

Empire (Ephesians and 1 Peter)? Furthermore, since gifts are necessary for the proper functioning of the body of Christ, how could they not be given today and yet have the church maintain that proper functioning?

On the other hand, if a believer must know his or her spiritual gift(s) before serving, then why are there no commands to discover one's spiritual gifts? We are all commanded to use our gift (1 Pet. 4:10—"employ it"). No text says we must know what gift we have before we can be expected to serve. Yet I will risk using the word discovery in this heading in order to encourage the reader to use his or her gifts.

A. Inform Yourself About the Total Package of Gifts in Your Life

There exist three categories of gifts in every Christian's life.

1. *Natural abilities.* God-given at birth, they include things like IQ, a measure of health and strength, musical talents, linguistic abilities, mechanical aptitudes, etc.

2. *Acquired abilities.* These include things like cooking, sewing, driving a car, learning a language, learning to play an instrument, etc. Although we may tend to take such skills for granted, many people in the world have few opportunities to acquire skills in these areas.

3. *Spiritual gifts.* A believer should inform himself of the total package of these various abilities that God has placed in his life. In other words, he should take inventory to know what stock he has available for the Lord's use. Just going through the process of taking inventory periodically may help the believer ascertain what areas of service he ought to explore.

B. Prepare Yourself by Taking Every Opportunity Available

This principle applies to all three categories of abilities. Sharpen talents, acquire skills, and work on the development of spiritual gifts. If one thinks he may have the gift of teaching, then it will be necessary to study. The ability to communicate may be more directly given (though even that skill can be sharpened by education), but certainly the content must be learned.

If one suspects he has the gift of giving, then he will work on being a good steward in all areas of life (1 Cor. 4:2). The ability to be generous is God-given, but to have the wherewithal with which to be generous requires discipline in financial affairs.

The gift of evangelism in the early church not only involved the preaching of the Good News but also itinerating with the message. To be able to do this may involve paying special attention to one's health in order to have the stamina to travel in spreading the Gospel.

If one has the gift of exhortation, it certainly should be based on biblical knowledge. The only valid and worthwhile exhortation must be rooted in biblical truths. And, of course, to have biblical knowledge requires study.

C. Be Active in the Lord's Work

Gifts are both discovered and developed by activity. Practice brings perception of one's total package of abilities, and practice develops those abilities. If you are seeking to discover your gift(s), then do not turn down opportunities to serve, even if you think they do not fall within the range of your abilities. God may be trying to tell you that you have abilities you do not recognize.

If you are active in doing what you can, then other opportunities may arise that will bring to light additional spiritual gifts. For example, when we first meet Philip in the book of Acts we see him helping distribute the relief money to needy (and bickering) widows (6:5). It is doubtful that before he undertook this ministry he sat down to decide whether or not he had that spiritual gift! Here was an opportunity to serve, and he took it. He proved faithful in performing this menial task. The Lord then entrusted him with another ministry, that of evangelizing the Samaritans (8:5), and, later, the Ethiopian eunuch. As he used that gift he became known as Philip the evangelist (21:8). But first he was Philip the helper of widows.

The same principle was true in Stephen's life. He first served along with Philip in ministering to the widows. But he also was full of faith (6:5), and he was a great witness (7:1-53). Faithfulness in one opportunity leads to other opportunities.

Let me show you an interesting comparison between some of the spiritual gifts and some of the commands that are given to all believers. The bottom line of this comparison simply says that we are commanded to minister in many areas whether or not we think we have the corresponding spiritual gift.

GIFTS GIVEN TO SOME

COMMANDS GIVEN TO ALL

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Ministering | 1. Serve one another (Gal. 5:13) |
| 2. Exhortation | 2. Exhort one another (Heb. 10:25) |
| 3. Giving | 3. All give (2 Cor. 9:7) |
| 4. Teaching | 4. Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) |
| 5. Showing mercy | 5. Be kind (Eph. 4:32) |
| 6. Faith | 6. Walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) |
| 7. Evangelism | 7. All witness (Acts 1:8) |

Thus all are commanded to do various ministries whether or not they possess the corresponding spiritual gift. If we faithfully obey these commands, we may discover our particular spiritual gifts.

D. Be a Good Steward of the Single or Married State

If either state is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 7:7), then being faithful in the stewardship that goes with either state is essential. Being single or being married are spiritual gifts that need to be developed. Both categories of people need to be faithful stewards (4:2). Both need to be growing in sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). Both need to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16).

The single person needs to pay particular attention to purity, to financial discipline, to using free time to study the Word, and to seeking opportunities to serve, say, in a foreign land for a short term. The single person must be concerned for the things of the Lord and how he or she may please Him (1 Cor. 7:32). The married person must give attention to the family and yet put the Lord's work above all (vv. 29, 33). The proper exercise and development of these gifts may be an important factor in the use of other gifts throughout life.

E. Be Willing to Do Anything for God

Actually, dedication or willingness to do anything is more important than discovering your spiritual gift(s). The passage on gifts in Ephesians 4 begins with an exhortation to a worthy life and lowly walk (vv. 1–2). The extended discussion on gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 is preceded in that letter by several exhortations to dedication (3:16; 6:19–20; 10:31). And the passage in Romans 12 begins with that great call to dedication of life in verses 1 and 2. One who is not dedicated will never discover all the abilities God has given him, nor will he fully develop those that he does discover.

IV. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

In a general sense the word means one who is sent (as used of Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25). But the technical sense of apostleship refers to the Twelve and possibly a few others like Paul and Barnabas (Acts

14:14). The gift was given for the founding of the church and was accredited by special signs (2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20). This is not a gift that God gives today.

B. Prophecy (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1–40; Eph. 4:11)

Like apostleship, prophecy is also used in both a general sense and a technical sense. In the general sense it refers to proclaiming and thus to preaching. But technically a prophet was not only able to proclaim God's message but he also was able to predict the future. All of his messages, whether proclaiming or predicting, came from God directly through special revelation.

The gift must have been rather widely given in New Testament times, though only a few prophets are mentioned specifically (Agabus, Acts 11:27–28; prophets in the church at Antioch, 13:1; Philip's four daughters, 21:9; and the prophets in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. 14). This, too, was a gift for the founding of the church, unnecessary after that period and after Revelation was written in the New Testament.

C. Miracles (1 Cor. 12:28) and Healings (vv. 9, 28, 30)

This is the ability to perform special signs, including physical healing. Paul exercised this gift at Ephesus (Acts 19:11–12); yet he did not or could not use this gift in the cases of Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:27), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), or Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20). The gift of healing might be viewed as a category within the larger gift of miracles. For example, Paul's calling down blindness on Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:11) was the exercise of his gift of miracles, but it certainly was not a healing. We recognize that a miracle or healing may be done by God apart from anyone's exercising a spiritual gift (as the physical sign that accompanied the filling of the Spirit in 4:31).

If this is so, then it does not follow that if one considers the gifts of miracles and healings temporary, he is also saying that God does not perform miracles or healings today. He is simply saying that the gifts are no longer operative because the need for them has ceased; i.e., to authenticate the Gospel message.

A believer today cannot necessarily expect to be healed. It is not God's will to give everyone good health. Though Paul prayed earnestly and repeatedly, and though he himself possessed the gift of healing, it was not God's will to heal Paul of his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:8–9). If it were God's will to heal every believer, then no believer would die, for even the last illness would be healed. Healers recognize their limitations, for they do not claim to heal decayed teeth or to instantaneously mend broken bones.

To disregard human means available for healing and to simply pray for a miraculous cure is like praying for a harvest and then sitting in a rocking chair, refusing to plant or cultivate the ground.

D. Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10)

Tongues is the God-given ability to speak in a language of earth that is unknown to the speaker. Interpretation of tongues is the ability to interpret that message in a language understood by the hearers. Unquestionably the first occurrence of tongues in Acts 2 was languages (note the word "language" in vv. 6 and 8). The presumption is that the tongues in Corinthians were no different.

The purposes of interpreted tongues were two: to communicate truth from God and to authenticate the truth of the Christian message, especially to Jewish people (1 Cor. 14:5, 21–22). Because the Corinthians were abusing this gift, Paul laid down strict regulations for its use: Only two or three were to speak in any meeting; no one was to speak in tongues unless the message could be interpreted; prophecy was always preferred; and women were to keep silent (vv. 27–34).

Uninterpreted tongues, especially a private prayer language, is unfruitful (v. 14) simply because even the one praying does not know what he or she is asking for. Therefore, it is better to pray with understanding, which means using a language that the person understands.

Whether one believes the biblical gift of tongues is given today or not, the Pentecostal teaching that tongues are the necessary sign of having been baptized by the Spirit is wrong. Paul said that all the believers in Corinth were baptized (12:13) but not all spoke in tongues (v. 30).

E. Evangelism (Eph. 4:11)

This ability to proclaim the Gospel message with exceptional clarity also included the idea that the ministry of an evangelist was itinerant. He was sent out by the church, but his ministry was done outside it. It might also be done publicly or privately. Whether or not one has the gift of evangelism, all believers are to be witnesses.

F. Pastor (Eph. 4:11)

This is the ability to shepherd, provide for, care for, and protect God's people. In verse 11 teaching is linked to pastoring, and in Acts 20:28 ruling is.

G. Serving (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12)

This is the ability to help or serve in the broadest sense of the word.

H. Teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

This is the ability to explain God's truth to people. Apparently the gift is sometimes given alone and sometimes in connection with that of pastor.

I. Faith (1 Cor. 12:9)

This is the ability to believe God for the supply of specific needs. Every believer should walk by faith, and each has a measure of faith, but not all have the gift of faith.

J. Exhortation (Rom. 12:8)

This involves the ability to encourage, comfort, and admonish people.

K. Distinguishing Spirits (1 Cor. 12:10)

This was the ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation when it was being given in oral form before the completion of the canon.

L. Showing Mercy (Rom. 12:8)

Like the gift of serving, this involves succoring, particularly those who are sick and afflicted.

M. Giving (Rom. 12:8)

This seems to be the ability to be very generous with what means one has. It should be exercised with simplicity, that is, with no thought of return or self-gain.

N. Administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

This is the ability to rule in the church.

O. Wisdom and Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8)

Like other early-church gifts, these involved the ability to understand and communicate God's truth to people.

The list numbers eighteen separate gifts (though I have linked several together). Is this all? Nowhere is there any suggestion that there are other gifts, and these that are listed would seem to be sufficient for the building of the body of Christ.²⁸

²⁸ Ryrie, C. C. (1999). *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (pp. 423–432). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Chapter 66
THE SPIRIT FILLING

The concept of the Spirit filling people appears fifteen times in the New Testament, four of them before Pentecost. It seems to have a twofold thrust, and its ramifications are very significant in relation to the Christian's life and activity.

I. THE RELATION OF SPIRIT FILLING TO SPIRITUALITY

A. A Definition of Spirituality

In 1 Corinthians 2:15 we have the nearest thing to a definition of spirituality, and that is actually only a description. If the spiritual believer judges or examines or discerns all things, yet himself is not understood by others, then spirituality means a mature, yet maturing, relationship to God.

This requires at least three things: (a) regeneration; (b) the ministries of God in the believer's life; and (c) time to grow in maturity.

B. The Role of the Spirit in Producing Spirituality

If maturity is a key facet in spirituality, then the Holy Spirit must play a major role in producing it. To be able to discern involves knowledge of God's will and perspective. This the Spirit produces through His ministry of teaching (John 16:12–15). It will also include praying according to the will of God, which is directed by the Spirit (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18). The spiritual believer will surely be exercising the spiritual gifts that the Spirit gives and empowers (1 Cor. 12:7). He or she will learn to war victoriously against the flesh by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16–17). In short, the fullness of the Spirit is key to producing spirituality in the believer.

C. Some Ramifications of the Concept

If spirituality is related to maturity, then there can be degrees of spirituality, since there are stages of maturity. Paul apparently expected the believers at Corinth to have reached a level of maturity whereby they could be called spiritual in five or six years. The Gospel was first preached in Corinth on his second missionary journey (about A.D. 50), and his first letter to the church, in which he chided the Christians because he could not treat them as spiritually mature people, was written about A.D. 55.

Seemingly a person could backslide in an area of spirituality without losing all that he or she had gained through the years. Some sins would affect more areas of life and fellowship than others.

If Spirit filling relates to the control of the Spirit in a life, then a new believer can certainly be controlled in whatever areas he knows about. But that does not mean he is spiritual, since not enough time has elapsed for him to mature. As maturity comes, more areas of needed control come to light. As we respond positively and allow the Spirit to expand His control, then we mature more. And so on.

Being a Christian for some time does not guarantee spirituality, since the person may not have allowed the Spirit control of his life during some of those years.

There are stages of maturity. Even though one may reach maturity, there is always more maturity to be achieved. Spirituality is a mature, yet maturing, relationship to God.

II. THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

There seem to be two facets to Spirit filling. The first may be described as a sovereign act of God whereby He possesses someone for special activity. This is expressed by the Greek phrase *pimplēmi pneumatos agiou*, and it highlights the event of being filled rather than the resultant state of fullness. It occurs in Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist), 41 (Elizabeth), 67 (Zacharias); Acts 2:4 (the group on the Day of Pentecost); 4:8 (Peter), 31 (the believers); 9:17 (Paul); and 13:9 (Paul).

Observe that this facet of filling was experienced by some of the same people more than once and without sin between that might necessitate a repeated filling. The repetition was caused by a new need for

special service, not intervening sin (2:4; 4:8, 31). God did this as His sovereign act without imposing conditions on those to be filled.

The second facet of Spirit filling may be described as the extensive influence and control of the Spirit in a believer's life. It evidences an abiding state of fullness rather than the specific event. It produces a certain character of life and seems to be a close synonym to spirituality. It is indicated by the Greek phrase *plere* or *pleroo pneumatos agiou*. It occurs in Luke 4:1 (Christ); Acts 6:3, 5 (the first helpers of the apostles); 7:55 (Stephen); 11:24 (Barnabas); 13:52 (the disciples); and Ephesians 5:18 (believers).

This facet of the Spirit's filling is the finest character reference one could have. It seems to be something every believer can experience (Acts 13:52) but not something every believer does experience (6:3). Though specific conditions are not mentioned in these contexts, the normal requirements for Christian growth would be implied conditions for attaining this kind of character.

The only time Paul wrote of filling (Eph. 5:18), he emphasized this aspect of being filled. Since he commanded it, apparently he did not think all his readers had experienced it. Two questions arise in the interpretation of this verse.

The first is what is the meaning of "spirit"? Does it refer to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit? If the latter, then the verse means to make use of the human spirit in corporate worship (though there is no other New Testament reference to filling of the human spirit). Indeed, the other occurrences of *en pneumati* in Ephesians (2:22; 3:5; 6:18) and Colossians (1:8) all clearly refer to the Holy Spirit. So one would assume Paul meant the Holy Spirit also in Ephesians 5:18. Note that the verb *pleroō* is used in relation to God (3:19) and to the Son (4:10). Why would Paul switch to the human spirit in 5:18?

The second question concerns the use of *en*. Does it mean with the Spirit or by the Spirit? In other words, is the Spirit the content of our filling or the Agent? The case can mean either or both. (For the idea of "content" see Rom. 1:29 and 2 Cor. 7:4.) Perhaps both ideas are to be understood here. The Spirit is the Agent who fills us with Himself.

To sum up: Spirit filling is both God's sovereign empowering us by the Spirit for special activity and the Spirit's filling us with His own character.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRIT FILLING

A. Christlike Character (Gal. 5:22–23)

When the Spirit controls a life, His fruit will be produced in that life. And, of course, the description of the fruit of the Spirit is a description of Christlikeness. However, each of these characteristics must be viewed in all their aspects, not just as a facet that is compatible with our ideas of Christlikeness.

Many undoubtedly conceive of Christlikeness as a reflection of their own personalities. An introvert will probably think of our Lord as shy and retiring, whereas an extrovert will see Him as an aggressive Leader. When the nine words that comprise the fruit of the Spirit are fully defined, we will have a well-rounded picture of true Christlikeness.

For example, love consists not only of tenderness but sometimes sternness. When Christ dealt with children, He showed tenderness. When He drove out the money changers, He showed sternness. But both acts were displays of love because He is God and God is love.

Joy is not only displayed in happiness but also in heaviness (1 Pet. 1:6). Peace involves tranquillity but may include problems in human relationships (Matt. 10:34). Longsuffering means evenness and patience but does not exclude prodding (as the Lord did with Philip, John 14:9). Gentleness and goodness mean beneficent thoughts and actions, which could include casting pigs into the Sea of Galilee as a kindness to the people who were engaged in that illegal business (Matt. 8:28–34). Faithfulness certainly includes serving with regularity and dependability, but it may include an irregular action. Meekness is gentleness but does not mean weakness. Self-control affects all areas of life (1 Cor. 9:27).

B. Evangelistic Involvement

When the filling of the Spirit is mentioned in the book of Acts, conversions are recorded. Spirit filling on the Day of Pentecost (2:4) resulted in the conversion of three thousand people (v. 41). The filling of the disciples in 4:31 resulted in multitudes of men and women turning to the Lord (5:14). One of the qualifications for the choosing of the first helpers was that they be Spirit filled (6:3). This was followed by the conversion of a number of priests (v. 7). Paul was filled with the Spirit after his conversion, and the fruit of his life is well known. When Barnabas, who was filled with the Spirit, went to Antioch, many were converted (11:24). Certainly those who prayed (4:24) and those who gave (v. 34) were as involved as those who gave the direct witness that resulted in these conversions.

C. Praise, Worship, Thanksgiving, Submissiveness (Eph. 5:19–21)

Paul listed these four evidences of Spirit filling after writing the command to be filled in verse 18. Praise is expressed outwardly by speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody in the heart is evidence of the inner attitude of worship. Giving thanks should be viewed as inclusively as possible, and it was written by a man who was at the time under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial. Submissiveness in the relationships of life (husband/wife, parents/children, masters/slaves) also characterizes the Spirit-filled life. Note that all of these are very ordinary things that affect the routines of life, not extraordinary feats of spiritual strength.

IV. HOW CAN I BE SPIRIT FILLED?

No example of praying for the filling of the Spirit exists in the post-Pentecost material of the New Testament. So praying, however earnest, is apparently not the way to be filled.

If filling relates to the control of the Spirit in one's life (whether in the sense of God's sovereign seizing of a person or of a sustained control that results in character), then filling is related to yieldedness. When I am willing to allow the Spirit to do what He wishes, it is up to Him to do or not to do with me whatever is His pleasure. I can check my willingness, but I cannot manipulate His activities.

As one matures, his knowledge and perspectives will deepen and broaden. New areas that need to be yielded will come to light. Therefore, filled people need to be filled as they continue to mature in the Lord. But no believer can afford not to be filled at every stage of his or her spiritual growth.

BAPTISM

FILLING

OCCURS ONLY ONE IN EACH BELIEVER'S LIFE

IS A REPEATED EXPERIENCE

NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE DAY OF PENTECOST

OCCURRED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

TRUE OF ALL BELIEVERS

NOT NECESSARILY EXPERIENCED BY ALL

CANNOT BE UNDONE

CAN BE LOST

RESULTS IN A *POSITION*

RESULTS IN A *POWER*

OCCURS WHEN WE BELIEV IN CHRIST

OCCURS THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

NO PREREQUISITE (EXCEPT F²⁹)

²⁹ Ryrie, C. C. (1999). *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (pp. 433–438). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Chapter 67
OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE SPIRIT

I. TEACHING

The teaching ministry of the Spirit was one of Christ's last promises before His crucifixion. He said, I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. (John 16:12–15)

A. Time

This particular ministry of the Spirit was yet future when our Lord spoke these words. It began on the Day of Pentecost and continues throughout this age. Peter's clear comprehension as revealed in his Pentecostal sermon is evidence of the beginning of this ministry.

B. Content

In general the content of the Spirit's ministry encompasses "all the truth" (the definite article appears in the text). This, of course, means revelation concerning Christ Himself, but on the basis of the written Word (for we have no other information about Him except through the Bible). Therefore, He teaches the believer the content of the Scripture, which leads him to an understanding of prophecy ("things to come"). This particularizing of the general promise concerning teaching ought to encourage every believer to study prophecy. Notice too that the Spirit does not originate His message—it comes from the Lord.

C. Result

The result of the teaching ministry of the Spirit is that Christ is glorified. If He is not glorified, then the Spirit has not been ministering. Note also that it is not the Spirit who is glorified or who is supposed to be glorified in a religious service, but Christ. Further, if Christ is known only through the written Word, then He will be glorified when the Word of God is expounded in the power of the Spirit.

D. Procedure

How does the Spirit teach the believer? John declares: "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). This could not mean that human teachers are unnecessary in explaining the Word of God. If it could, then what would be the use of the gift of teaching? (Rom. 12:7). John wrote concerning the presence of antichrists in the group. Having stated his own conviction concerning their heresies, he simply declared that no man really had to tell them the truth, for the Holy Spirit would confirm it to them. Human teachers are a necessary link in the procedure of instructing believers, though the ultimate authentication of the teaching comes from the Spirit.

II. GUIDING

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). Leading is a confirmation of sonship, for sons are led. This work of guidance is particularly the work of the Spirit. Romans 8:14 states it and the book of Acts amply illustrates it (8:29; 10:19–20; 13:2, 4; 16:6–7; 20:22–23). This ministry of the Spirit is one of the most assuring ones for the Christian. The child of God never needs to walk in the dark; he is always free to ask and receive directions from the Spirit Himself.

III. ASSURING

The Spirit is also the One who assures the Christian that he is a child of God. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The word for children here is *tekna* (in contrast to *huioi*, sons) and emphasizes the fact that the believer shares in the life of the Father. Because of this, he also shares as an heir in the possessions of the Father. Assurance of all this is the work of the Spirit to the heart of each Christian.

Undoubtedly assurance is also brought to the heart of the believer by an increased understanding of some of the things that the Spirit has done for him. For instance, assurance will deepen when one understands what it means to be sealed with the Spirit and to have been given the earnest of the Spirit as a guarantee of the completion of redemption (Eph. 1:13–14). The comprehension of what is involved in the Spirit’s joining the believer to the risen, undying body of Christ will also nurture assurance. Of course, the comprehension of these great accomplishments is part of the teaching ministry of the Spirit, so in many ways the Holy Spirit is connected with and concerned about the assurance of the child of God.

IV. PRAYING

A. The Statement

Though we may not fully understand the ramifications of the Spirit’s praying in the believer, the fact that He does is perfectly clear: “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

B. The Need

The stated reason that we need help is because of our infirmity (the word is singular). He helps our entire weakness, but especially as it manifests itself in relation to our prayer life, and particularly in relation to knowing what to pray for at the present moment. While we wait for our full redemption, we need guidance in the particulars of prayer.

C. The Method

The way the Spirit helps meet our needs is described in general by the word “helps,” which literally means “puts His hand to the work in cooperation with us.” Specifically this help is given in the form of “groanings too deep for words.” These groanings, the meaning of which cannot be grasped, find no adequate or formulated expression. One thing we do know—they are according to the will of God.

In another passage we are told that the Spirit guides and directs our prayers (Eph. 6:18). This is more the guidance of the believer’s heart and mind as he prays than the unutterable groanings of the Spirit Himself.

D. The Result

The result of such a prayer life is assurance to the believer of the certainty of his future and full redemption (Rom. 8:23). This ministry of the Spirit is a kind of earnestlike guarantee of that redemption. Such a satisfying prayer life will help keep us content in this present world as we wait for the consummation. The ministry of the Spirit, then, is not only connected with answered prayer, but it cultivates our assurance and contentment in this life.

V. SANCTIFYING

A. The Concept of Sanctification

The word *sanctify* basically means to set apart. It has the same root as the words *saint* and *holy*. For the Christian, sanctification includes three aspects. The first is called positional or definitive sanctification, which relates to the position every believer enjoys by virtue of being set apart as a member of God’s family

through faith in Christ. This is true for all believers regardless of different degrees of spiritual growth. Paul addressed the carnal Christians with all of their sinful practices as sanctified (and thus as saints, 1 Cor. 1:2; see also 6:11 where the verbs indicate accomplished facts, not something to be attained).

The second aspect of sanctification concerns the present experiential or progressive work of continuing to be set apart during the whole of our Christian lives. Every command and exhortation to holy living concerns progressive sanctification (1 Pet. 1:16).

The third aspect is usually called ultimate sanctification, which we will attain in heaven when we shall be completely and eternally set apart to our God (Eph. 5:26–27; Jude 24–25).

B. The Agents in Sanctification

All persons of the Trinity are involved in sanctification, and believers are too. In positional sanctification, which comes when we are saved, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, our responsibility being to believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:13). Christ's death is the basis for our position in sanctification (Heb. 10:10). In ultimate sanctification God is the one who will present us blameless.

In the process of progressive sanctification several agents are involved. It was to the Father that our Lord prayed that He would sanctify us through the truth (John 17:17 and 1 Thess. 5:23). Thus the Bible becomes an indispensable foundation for our sanctification. How else could we know for sure what pleases a holy God except through His Word? Christ's death (to which He sanctified or set Himself apart) serves as the basis for our being able to progress in sanctification (John 17:19; Rom. 6:1–13). However, the Holy Spirit is the prominent agent in the outworking of our progressive sanctification. It is by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). The Spirit ignites love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). By the Spirit we are changed from glory to glory to become more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). And it is the fruit of the Spirit that produces in us Christlikeness, which is the goal of sanctification (Gal. 5:22–23).

Yet the believer must faithfully discharge his or her responsibilities in sanctification. When we present ourselves as slaves to righteousness, sanctification results (Rom. 6:19; see also Rom. 6:13; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 2:11). We must obey the commands and exhortations of the Christian life in order to progress in holiness.

To withhold or withdraw areas of our lives from God's desired sanctification for us will result in our being controlled by the flesh rather than by the Spirit. This will result in the believer's being carnal in those unyielded or rebellious areas (1 Cor. 3:1–5). Carnality exhibits the characteristics of the unsaved life because of being controlled by the flesh (Gal. 5:16–21). Thus yieldedness, Spirit filling, and the sanctifying process are involved in setting us apart more and more to the image of Christ.³⁰

SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE PRODUCES A LIFESTYLE

The early church understood that once the Holy Spirit swept through your life, it would never again be the same! Much of that understanding was related to the fact that the Greek and Hebrew words for spirit are also the same words used for breath. The first Christians knew that the presence of the spirit in their lives was their literal breath of life. On the day of pentecost, not only was the "breath" provided that made spiritual language possible, but the "spirit" that energized a whole lifestyle change was attendant as well. As an example, compare Peter on the night of Jesus' death (Luke 22:54–62) and on the day of pentecost (Acts 2:14–41). It is the presence of the Holy Spirit which also produces the fruits of a lifestyle filled with God's love and power. Galatians 5:22, 23 clearly declares that Holy Spirit fullness is more than merely language. It is also the fullness of the One who is changing us into the likeness of our Savior. Read the following Word Wealth, then write down how you think the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life might change *your* lifestyle.

³⁰ Ryrie, C. C. (1999). [*Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*](#) (pp. 439–443). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

WORD WEALTH

In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for wind, breath, and spirit is the same word. *Ruach* (Hebrew) occurs nearly 400 times. Job 37:21 and Psalm 148:8 speak about “winds” related to storms. In Genesis 6:17, “the *ruach* of life” is translated “the breath of life.” Generally *ruach* is translated “spirit,” whether concerning the human spirit, a distressing spirit (1 Sam. 16:23), or the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is especially presented in Isaiah: God puts His Spirit upon the Messiah (42:1); He will pour out His Spirit upon Israel’s descendants (44:3); Yahweh and His Spirit both send the Anointed One (48:16, a reference to the triune God); the Spirit of God commissions and empowers the Messiah (61:1–3). In Greek, *pneuma* is that part of a person capable of responding to God. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, who draws us to Christ, convicts us of sin, enables us to accept Christ as our personal Savior, assures us of salvation, and enables us to live the victorious life, understand the Bible, pray according to God’s will, and share Christ with others.

FAITH ALIVE

How has the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life changed your lifestyle?

How might it change in the future?

What areas of your life do you need to open to the Holy Spirit?

How do you think that the “wind” of the Holy Spirit has become your “breath of life”?

Look up these verses that tell us how we are to relate to the topic of being filled with the Spirit. Write down what our attitude is to be:

Ephesians 3:19

Ephesians 5:18

The tense of the Greek for *be filled* in Ephesians 5:18 makes clear that such a Spirit-filled condition does not stop with a single experience, but is maintained by “continually being filled.”

What attitude toward spiritual language and its expression do these three verses authorize?

1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:18; 2 Timothy 1:7

The early church viewed the idea of Spirit-filled life with great joy and expectancy. Read the following verses on how that life manifested itself in the lives of the early Christians.

Acts 4:31; 13:52; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 3:16

How might the following verses affect your daily choices?

Philippians 1:9–11

Colossians 1:9–12

Romans 8:6–9

Jude 20, 21

While the early church lived in Spirit-filled life, they understood that way of life to include speaking in tongues. Look up the following Scriptures and write down how many of the people spoke with tongues.

Acts 2:4

Acts 8:14–17

Acts 10:44

Acts 19:1–7

What was Paul’s desire for believers in this regard?

1 Corinthians 14:5

Is this verse (and Paul’s related desire for all believers) for us today? (See 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 and Heb. 13:8.)

As we continue through this study guide, we will be studying in depth the benefits of spiritual language in the life of the believer. Here, however, is a brief overview. Look up the following verses and write down how spiritual language is to be a resource to us.

John 16:13
Romans 8:26
Ephesians 6:14–18 (note verse 18)
Ephesians 5:19
1 Corinthians 14:4

There are also things that spiritual language is not to be in our lives. Read the Kingdom Extra below, then look up the verses following to see how we are to conduct our lives in the Spirit.

KINGDOM EXTRA

Speaking with tongues is neither unbiblical nor outdated.
Speaking with tongues is not a transcendental experience.
Speaking with tongues is not a status symbol.
Speaking with tongues is not proposed as a substitute for spiritual growth.

1. Speaking with tongues is biblical: Acts 2:3, 4
2. Speaking with tongues is for today: Acts 2:38, 39
3. Speaking with tongues is not a transcendental experience, but the person speaking in tongues is in full control of himself or herself: 1 Corinthians 14:32, 33, 40.
4. Speaking with tongues is not a status symbol. James makes clear that we are never to favor one person above another. Read James 2:1–9 and write down how this would influence our actions toward others regardless of whether or not they have spoken in tongues.
5. Speaking in tongues will aid our spiritual growth but cannot substitute for it. John 16:5–15 discusses the work of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does John intimate that the presence of the Spirit surrenders our involvement in spiritual life. Read this passage in John and write out what the Holy Spirit has come to do:

v. 7
vv. 8, 9
vv. 8, 10
vv. 8, 11
v. 13
v. 14

FAITH ALIVE

After studying the biblical foundation of spiritual language, what is your attitude toward the subject? How is this like or unlike the attitude in the Scriptures you read? In which area on this subject is the Lord inviting you to take a new step of faith by accepting a new outlook? Write a prayer to the Lord about what you would like to see Him do in your heart as you explore the remainder of this study guide.³¹

Be Being Filled

C. Appeal for a New Morality (Ephesians 4:17–5:21)

4:17 Here begins the apostle's eloquent appeal for a new morality, an appeal which extends to 5:21. Testifying **in the Lord**, that is, by authority of **the Lord** and by divine inspiration, he urges the Christians to put off every trace of their past life, as if it were a muddy coat, and to put on the virtues and excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ. **You should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.** They were no longer **Gentiles**; they were Christians. There should be a corresponding change in their lives. Paul saw the Christless world of the nations sunk in ignorance and degradation. Seven terrible things characterized them. They were:

Aimless. They walked **in the futility of their mind.** Their life was empty, purposeless, and fruitless. There was great activity but no progress. They chased bubbles and shadows, and neglected the great realities of life.

³¹ Hayford, J. W., & Bauer, R. (1996). *Praying in the Spirit: heavenly resources for praise and intercession*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

4:18 Blind. “They live blindfold in a world of illusion” (JBP). **Their understanding was darkened.** First, they had a native incapacity to understand spiritual truths, and then, because of their rejection of the knowledge of the true God, they suffered blindness as a judgment from the Lord.

Ungodly. They were **alienated from the life of God**, or at a great distance from Him. This was brought about by their willful, deep-seated ignorance and by the hardness of their hearts. They had rejected the light of God in creation and in conscience, and had turned to idolatry. Thereafter they had plunged farther and farther from God.

4:19 Shameless. They were **past feeling**. W. C. Wright explains:

Moule translates it: “having got over the pain.” How expressive! When conscience is at first denied, there is a twinge of pain; there is a protest that can be heard. But if the voice is silenced, presently the voice becomes less clear and clamant; the protest is smothered; the twinge is less acute, until at last it is possible to “get over the pain.”

Sordid. They consciously gave **themselves over to lewdness**, that is, to vile forms of behavior. The cardinal sin of the Gentiles was and still is sexual immorality. They descended to unparalleled depths of depravity; the walls of Pompeii tell the story of shame and lost decency. The same sins characterize the Gentile world today.

Indecent. In their sexual sin, they worked **all uncleanness**. There is a suggestion here that they gave themselves up to every kind of **uncleanness** as if they were carrying on a trade or business in **lewdness**.

Insatiable. With greediness. They were never satisfied. They never had enough. Their sin created an enormous appetite for more of the same thing.

4:20 How different all this was from the **Christ** whom the Ephesians had come to know and love! He was the personification of purity and chastity. He knew no sin, He did no sin, there was no sin in Him.

4:21 The **if in if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him** is not meant to cast doubt on the conversion of the Ephesians. It simply emphasizes that all those who had **heard Christ** and had **been taught by Him** had come to know Him as the essence of holiness and godliness. To have heard Christ means to have **heard Him** with the hearing of faith—to have accepted Him as Lord and Savior. The expression, **taught by Him**, refers to the instruction the Ephesians received as they walked in fellowship with Him subsequent to their conversion. Blaikie remarks: “All truth acquires a different hue and a different character when there is a personal relation to Jesus. Truth apart from the Person of Christ has little power.” **As the truth is in Jesus.** He not only teaches the truth; He is truth incarnate (John 14:6). The name **Jesus** takes us back to His life on earth, since that is His name in Incarnation. In that spotless life which He lived as a Man in this world, we see the very antithesis of the walk of the Gentiles which Paul has just described.

4:22 In the school of Christ we learn that at the time of conversion we put away our **old man which grows corrupt** through **deceitful lusts**. **The old man** means all that a person was before his conversion, all that he was as a child of Adam. It is corrupted as a result of giving in to **deceitful**, evil cravings which are pleasant and promising in anticipation but hideous and disappointing in retrospect. As far as his position in Christ is concerned, the believer’s **old man** was crucified and buried with Christ. In practice, the believer should reckon it to be dead. Here Paul is emphasizing the positional side of the truth—we have **put off the old man** once for all.

4:23 A second lesson the Ephesians learned at the feet of Jesus was that they were being **renewed in the spirit of their mind**. This points to a complete about-face in their thinking, a change from mental impurity to holiness. The Spirit of God influences the thought processes to reason from God’s standpoint, not from that of unsaved men.

4:24 The third lesson is that they had **put on the new man** once for all. **The new man** is what a believer is in Christ. It is the new creation, in which old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). This **new** kind of **man** is **according to God**, that is, **created** in His likeness. And it manifests itself **in true righteousness and holiness**. **Righteousness** means right conduct toward others. **Holiness** is “piety towards God, which puts Him in His place,” as F. W. Grant defines it.

4:25 Paul now moves from the believer's standing to their state. Because they have put off the old man and have put on the new man through their union with Christ, they should demonstrate this startling reversal in their everyday lives.

They can do this, first, by **putting away lying** and putting on truthfulness. **Lying** here includes every form of dishonesty, whether it is shading of the truth, exaggeration, cheating, failure to keep promises, betrayal of confidence, flattery, or fudging on income taxes. The Christian's word should be absolutely trustworthy. His yes should mean yes, and his no, no. The life of a Christian becomes a libel rather than a Bible when he stoops to any form of tampering with truthfulness.

Truth is a debt we owe to all men. However, when Paul uses the word, **neighbor**, here, he is thinking particularly of our fellow believers. This is clear from the motive given: **for we are members of one another** (cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–27). It is as unthinkable for one Christian to lie to another as it would be for a nerve in the body to deliberately send a false message to the brain, or for the eye to deceive the rest of the body when danger is approaching.

4:26 A second area for practical renewal in our lives is in connection with sinful **wrath** and righteous anger. There are times when a believer may be righteously **angry**, for instance, when the character of God is impugned. In such cases anger is commanded: **Be angry**. Anger against evil can be righteous. But there are other times when anger is sinful. When it is an emotion of malice, jealousy, resentment, vindictiveness, or hatred because of personal wrongs, it is forbidden. Aristotle said, "Anybody can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is *not* easy."

If a believer gives way to unrighteous **wrath**, he should confess and forsake it quickly. Confession should be made both to God and to the victim of his anger. There should be no nursing of grudges, no harboring of resentments, no carrying over of irritations. **Do not let the sun go down on your wrath**. Anything that mars fellowship with God or with our brethren should immediately be made right.

4:27 Unconfessed sins of temper provide **the devil** with a foothold or a base of operations. He is capable of finding plenty of these without our deliberately helping him. Therefore, we must not excuse malice, wrath, envy, hatred, or passion in our lives. These sins discredit the Christian testimony, stumble the unsaved, offend believers, and harm ourselves spiritually and physically.

4:28 Now Paul turns his attention to the contrasting behavior patterns of stealing and sharing. The old man steals; the new man shares. Put off the old; put on the new! The fact that Paul would ever address such instruction as "**Let him who stole steal no longer**" to believers disproves any notion that Christians are sinlessly perfect. They still have the old, evil, selfish nature that must be reckoned dead in daily experience. Stealing may take many forms—all the way from grand larceny to nonpayment of debts, to witnessing for Christ on the employer's time, to plagiarism, to the use of false measurements, and to falsifying expense accounts. Of course, this prohibition against stealing is not new. The Law of Moses forbade theft (Ex. 20:15). It is what follows that makes the passage distinctively Christian. Not only should we refrain from stealing, we should actually **labor** in an honorable occupation in order to be able to share with others who are less fortunate. Grace, not law, is the power of holiness. Only the positive power of grace can turn a thief into a philanthropist.

This is radical and revolutionary. The natural approach is for men to work for the supply of their own needs and desires. When their income rises, their standard of living rises. Everything in their lives revolves around self. This verse suggests a nobler, more exalted view of secular employment. It is a means of supplying a modest standard of living for one's family, but also of alleviating human **need**, spiritual and temporal, at home and abroad. And how vast that **need** is!

4:29 The apostle now turns to the subject of speech, and contrasts that which is worthless with that which edifies. **Corrupt** speech generally means conversation that is filthy and suggestive; this would include off-color jokes, profanity, and dirty stories. But here it probably has the wider sense of any form of conversation that is frivolous, empty, idle, and worthless. Paul deals with obscene and vile language in 5:4; here he is telling us to abandon profitless speech and substitute constructive conversation. The Christian's speech should be:

Edifying. It should result in, building up the hearers.

Appropriate. It should be suitable to the occasion.

Gracious. It should **impart grace to the hearers.**

4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. If this is taken in connection with the preceding verse, it means that worthless talk grieves the Spirit. It may also be linked to verses 25–28 to indicate that lying, unrighteous anger, and stealing also hurt Him. Or in a still wider sense, it may be saying that we should abstain from anything and everything that grieves Him.

Three powerful reasons are suggested:

1. He is the *Holy Spirit*. Anything that is not holy is distasteful to Him.

2. He is the Holy Spirit of **God**, a member of the blessed Trinity.

3. We **were sealed** by Him **for the day of redemption**. As mentioned previously, a seal speaks of ownership and security. He is the seal that guarantees our preservation until Christ returns for us and our salvation is complete. Interestingly enough, Paul here uses the eternal security of the believer as one of the strongest reasons why we should *not* sin.

The fact that He can be grieved shows that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not a mere influence. It also means He loves us, because only a person who loves can be grieved. The favorite ministry of God's Spirit is to glorify Christ and to change the believer into His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). When a Christian sins, He has to turn from this ministry to one of restoration. It grieves Him to see the believer's spiritual progress interrupted by sin. He must then lead the Christian to the place of repentance and confession of sin.

4:31 All sins of temper and tongue should be put away. The apostle lists several of them. Though it is not possible to distinguish each one precisely, the overall meaning is clear:

Bitterness—Smoldering resentment, unwillingness to forgive, harsh feeling.

Wrath—Bursts of rage, violent passion, temper tantrums.

Anger—Grouchiness, animosity, hostility.

Clamor—Loud outcries of anger, bawling, angry bickering, shouting down of opponents.

Evil speaking—Insulting language, slander, abusive speech.

Malice—Wishing evil on others, spite, meanness.

4:32 The foregoing sins of temper should be terminated, but the vacuum must be filled by the cultivation of Christlike qualities. The former are natural vices; the following are supernatural virtues:

Kindness—An unselfish concern for the welfare of others, and a desire to be helpful even at great personal sacrifice.

Tenderheartedness—A sympathetic, affectionate, and compassionate interest in others, and a willingness to bear their burden.

Forgiveness—A readiness to pardon offenses, to overlook personal wrongs against oneself, and to harbor no desire for retaliation.

The greatest example of One who forgives is God Himself. The basis of His forgiveness is the work of Christ at Calvary. And we are the unworthy objects. God could not forgive sin without proper satisfaction being made. In His love He provided the satisfaction which His righteousness demanded. **In Christ**, that is, in His Person and work, God found a righteous basis on which He could forgive us.

Since He forgave us when we were in debt “millions of dollars,” we ought to forgive others when they owe us “a few dollars” (Matt. 18:23–28. JBP). Lenski counsels:

The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then *my* soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine save that I should help him according to Matt. 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him.

5:1 God's example of forgiveness in 4:32 forms the basis of Paul's exhortation here. The connection is this: God in Christ has forgiven you. Now **be imitators of God** in forgiving one another. A special motive is appended in the words, **as dear children**. In natural life, children bear the family likeness and should seek to uphold the family name. In spiritual life, we should manifest our Father to the world and seek to walk worthy of our dignity as His beloved **children**.

5:2 Another way in which we should resemble the Lord is by walking **in love**. The rest of the verse explains that to **walk in love** means to give ourselves for others. This is what Christ, our perfect Example, did. Amazing fact! He loved us. The proof of His love is that He gave Himself for us in death at Calvary.

His gift is described as **an offering and a sacrifice to God**. **An offering** is anything given to God; **a sacrifice** here includes the additional element of death. He was the true burnt **offering**, the One who was completely devoted to do the will of God, even to the death of the cross. His **sacrifice** of unspeakable devotion is eulogized as being **for a sweet-smelling aroma**. F. B. Meyer comments, "In love so measureless, so reckless of cost, for those who were naturally so unworthy of it, there was a spectacle which filled heaven with fragrance and God's heart with joy."

The Lord Jesus pleased His Father by giving Himself for others. The moral is that we too can bring joy to God by giving ourselves for others.

Others, Lord, yes, others!
Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for others
That I may live like Thee.

—Charles D. Meigs

5:3 In verses 3 and 4 the apostle reverts to the topic of sexual sins and decisively calls for saintly separation from them. First, he mentions various forms of sexual immorality:

Fornication. Whenever it is mentioned in the same verse as adultery, **fornication** means illicit intercourse among *unmarried* persons. However, when, as here, the word is not distinguished from adultery, it probably refers to *any* form of sexual immorality, and the NKJV usually so translates it. (Our word "pornography," literally, "whore-writing," is related to the word translated **fornication**.)

Uncleanness. This too may mean immoral acts, but perhaps it can also include impure pictures, obscene books, and other suggestive materials that go along with lives of indecency and that feed the fires of passion.

Covetousness. While we generally think of this as meaning the lust for money, here it refers to sensual desire—the insatiable greed to satisfy one's sexual appetite outside the bounds of marriage. (See Ex. 20:17: "You shall not covet . . . your neighbor's wife...")

These things should **not even be named among** Christians. It goes without saying that they should never have to be named as *having been committed* by believers. They should not even be *discussed* in any way that might lessen their sinful and shameful character. There is always the greatest danger in speaking lightly of them, making excuses for them, or even discussing them familiarly and continually. Paul accents his exhortation with the phrase, **as is fitting for saints**. Believers have been separated from the corruption that is in the world; now they should live in practical separation from dark passion, both in deed and word.

5:4 Their speech should also be free from every trace of:

Filthiness. This refers to dirty stories, suggestive jokes with a sexual coloring, and all forms of obscenity and indecency.

Foolish talking. This means empty conversation that is worthy of a moron. Here it may include gutter language.

Coarse jesting. This means jokes or talk with unsavory, hidden meanings. To talk about something, to joke about it, to make it a frequent subject of conversation is to introduce it into your mind, and to bring you closer to actually doing it.

It is always dangerous to joke about sin. Instead of using his tongue for such unworthy and unbecoming talk, the Christian should deliberately cultivate the practice of expressing **thanks** to God for all the blessings and mercies of life. This is pleasing to the Lord, a good example to others, and beneficial to one's own soul.

5:5 There is no room for doubt as to God's attitude toward immoral persons: they have no **inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. This verdict is in sharp contrast to the world's current attitude that sex offenders are sick and need psychiatric treatment. Men say immorality is a sickness; God calls it sin. Men condone it; God condemns it. Men say the answer is psychoanalysis; God says the answer is regeneration.

Three offenders are specified, the same three found in verse 3—the **fornicator**, the **unclean person**, and the **covetous man**. Here the thought is added that a **covetous person is an idolater**. One reason he is **an idolater** is that he has a false impression of what God is like: his concept of God is a Being who approves sensual greed, otherwise, he would not dare be covetous. Another reason why covetousness is idolatry is that it puts the person's own will above the will of God. A third reason is that it results in the worship of the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

When Paul says that such persons have no **inheritance in the kingdom**, he means precisely that. People whose lives are characterized by these sins are lost, are in their sins, and are on the way to hell. They are not in the invisible **kingdom** at the present time; they will not be in **the kingdom** when Christ returns to reign; and they will be forever shut out from the everlasting **kingdom** in heaven. The apostle is not saying these are people who, though they are in **the kingdom**, will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The subject is salvation, not rewards. They may profess to be Christians, but they prove by their lives that they were never saved. They *can* be saved, of course, by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. But if they are genuinely converted, they will no longer practice these sins.

Notice that the deity of Christ is implied in the expression, **the kingdom of Christ and God**. **Christ** is put on an equal level with **God** the Father as Ruler in **the kingdom**.

5:6 Many people of the world adopt an increasingly lenient and tolerant attitude toward sexual immorality. They say the gratification of bodily appetites is needful and beneficial, and that their repression produces warped, inhibited personalities. They say morals are entirely a matter of the culture in which we live, and that since "pre-marital," "extra-marital," and "gay" sex (which God's word condemns as fornication, adultery, and perversion) are accepted in our culture, they ought to be legalized. Surprisingly enough, some of the leading spokesmen in favor of making sexual sins acceptable are men who hold high positions in the professing church. Thus, the laymen who always thought immorality was immoral are now being assured by prominent clergymen that such an attitude is passé.

Christians should not be hoodwinked by such double talk. **Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**. The Lord's attitude toward such sins as fornication and adultery was seen in Numbers 25:1–9: twenty-four thousand Israelites were slain because they sinned with the women of Moab. The Lord's attitude toward homosexuality was displayed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by brimstone and fire from heaven (Gen. 19:24, 28).

But God's **wrath** is displayed not only in such supernatural acts of punishment. Those who practice sexual sins experience His judgment in other ways. There are physical effects, such as venereal disease and AIDS. There are mental, nervous, and emotional disorders arising from a sense of guilt. There are changes in the personality—the effeminate often becomes even more so (Rom. 1:27). And of course there will be the final, eternal judgment of God on fornicators and adulterers (Heb. 13:4). No mercy will be shown to **sons of disobedience**—to those who are descended from disobedient Adam and who willfully follow him in disobeying God (Rev. 21:8).

5:7 Believers are solemnly warned to have no part in such ungodly behavior. To do so is to dishonor the name of Christ, to wreck other lives, to ruin one's own testimony, and to invite a torrent of retribution.

5:8 To enforce his urgent imperative in verse 7, the apostle now gives a pithy discourse on **darkness** and **light** (vv. 8–14). The Ephesians **were once darkness, but now they are light in the Lord**. Paul does not say they were *in* the darkness, but that they themselves *were* the personification of **darkness**. Now, through union with the Lord, they have become **light**. He is light; they are in Him; so **now they are light in the Lord**. Their state should henceforth correspond with their standing. They should **walk as children of light**.

5:9 This parenthesis explains the type of **fruit** produced by those who walk in the light.

The fruit of the Spirit consists of **all** forms of **goodness, righteousness, and truth**. **Goodness** here is an inclusive term for all moral excellence. **Righteousness** means integrity in all dealings with God and men. **Truth** is honesty, equity, and reality. Put them all together and you have the light of a Christ-filled life shining out in a scene of dismal darkness.

5:10 Those who walk in the light not only produce the type of fruit listed in the preceding verse, but also find **out what is acceptable to the Lord**. They put every thought, word, and action to the test. What does **the Lord** think about this? How does it appear in His presence? Every area of life comes under the searchlight—conversation, standard of living, clothes, books, business, pleasures, entertainments, furniture, friendships, vacations, cars, and sports.

5:11 Believers should **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, either by participation or by any attitude that might indicate tolerance or leniency. These **works of darkness** are **unfruitful** as far as God and men are concerned. It was this feature of utter barrenness that once prompted Paul to ask the Roman Christians, “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?” (Rom. 6:21). Then too they are **works of darkness**: they belong to the world of dim lights, drawn drapes, locked doors, secret rooms. They reflect man’s natural preference for **darkness** and his abhorrence of light when his deeds are evil (John 3:19). The believer is called not only to abstain from **the unfruitful works of darkness**, but positively he is called to **expose them**. He does this in two ways: first, by a life of holiness, and second, by words of correction spoken under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

5:12 Now the apostle explains why the Christian must have no complicity with moral corruption and must rebuke it. The vile sins which people commit in secret are so debased that **it is shameful even to mention them**, let alone commit them. The unnatural forms of sin which man has invented are so bad that even to describe them would defile the minds of those who listened. So the Christian is taught to refrain from even talking about them.

5:13 Light makes manifest whatever is in the darkness. So a holy Christian life reveals by contrast the sinfulness of unregenerate lives. And appropriate words of rebuke reveal sin in its true character also. Blaikie illustrates:

As, for instance, when our Lord reproved the hypocrisy of the Pharisees—their practices had not seemed to the disciples very evil before, but when Christ threw on them the pure light of truth, they were made manifest in their true character—they appeared and they still appear, odious.

The latter part of verse 13 may better read: **for whatever is made manifest is light**. This simply means that when Christians exercise their ministry as light, others are brought to the light. Wicked men are transformed into children of light through the reproofing ministry of **light**.

It is not a rule without exceptions, of course. Not everyone who is exposed to the light becomes a Christian. But it is a general principle in the spiritual realm that light has a way of reproducing itself. We find an illustration of the principle in 1 Peter 3:1, where believing wives are taught to win their unbelieving husbands to Christ by the example of their lives: “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.” Thus the light of Christian wives triumphs over the darkness of heathen husbands, and the latter become light.

5:14 The life of the believer should always be preaching a sermon, should always be exposing the surrounding darkness, should always be extending this invitation to unbelievers:

**“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”**

This is the voice of light speaking to those who are sleeping in darkness and lying in spiritual death. The light calls them to life and illumination. If they answer the invitation, **Christ will shine on them and give them light**.

5:15 In the next seven verses, Paul contrasts foolish footsteps and careful conduct by a series of negative and positive exhortations. The first is a general plea to his readers to **walk not as fools but as wise**. As mentioned previously, **walk**, is one of the key words of the Epistle: it is mentioned seven times to describe “the whole round of the activities of the individual life.” To **walk circumspectly** is to live in the light of our position as God’s children. To **walk as fools** means to descend from this high plane to the conduct of worldly men.

5:16 The walk of wisdom calls us to redeem **the time** or buy up the opportunities. Every day brings its opened doors, its vast potential. **Redeeming the time** means living lives noted for holiness, deeds of mercy, and words of help. What lends special urgency to this matter is the **evil** character of **the days** in which we live. They remind us God will not always strive with man, the day of grace will soon close, the opportunities for worship, witness, and service on earth will soon be forever ended.

5:17 So we should **not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is**. This is crucial. Because of the abounding evil and the shortness of the time, we might be tempted to spend our days in frantic and feverish activity of our own choosing. But this would amount to nothing but wasted energy. The important thing is to find out God’s **will** for us each day and do it. This is the only way to be efficient and effective. It is all too possible to carry on Christian work according to our own ideas and in our own strength, and be completely out of **the will of the Lord**. The path of wisdom is to discern God’s **will** for our individual lives, then to obey it to the hilt.

5:18 **And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation**. In our North American culture, such a command seems almost shocking and unnecessary, since total abstinence is the rule among so many Christians. But we must remember that the Bible was written for believers in all cultures, and in many countries wine is still a fairly common beverage on the table. The Scriptures do not condemn the use of wine, but they do condemn its abuse. The use of wine as a medicine is recommended (Prov. 31:6; 1 Tim. 5:23). The Lord Jesus made wine for use as a beverage at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1–11).

But the use of wine becomes abuse under the following circumstances and is then forbidden:

1. When it leads to excess (Prov. 23:29–35).
2. When it becomes habit-forming (1 Cor. 6:12b).
3. When it offends the weak conscience of another believer (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9).
4. When it hurts a Christian’s testimony in the community and is therefore not to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
5. When there is any doubt in the Christian’s mind about it (Rom. 14:23).

Paul’s recommended alternative to being **drunk with wine** is being **filled with the Spirit**. This connection too may startle us at first, but when we compare and contrast the two states, we see why the apostle links them in this way.

First, there are certain similarities:

1. In both conditions, the person is under a power outside himself. In one case it is the power of intoxicating liquor (sometimes called “spirits”); in the other case it is the power of **the Spirit**.
2. In both conditions, the person is fervent. On the Day of Pentecost, the fervency produced by **the Spirit** was mistaken for that produced by new wine (Acts 2:13).
3. In both conditions, the person’s walk is affected—his physical walk in the case of drunkenness and his moral behavior in the other instance.

But there are two ways in which the two conditions present sharp contrasts:

1. In the case of drunkenness, there is **dissipation** and debauchery. The Spirit’s filling never produces these.
2. In the case of drunkenness, there is loss of self-control. But the fruit of **the Spirit** is self-control (Gal. 5:23). A believer who is filled **with the Spirit** is never transported outside himself where he can no longer control his actions; the spirit of a prophet is always subject to the prophet (1 Cor. 14:32).

Sometimes in the Bible, the filling **with the Spirit** seems to be presented as a sovereign gift of God. For instance, John the Baptist was **filled with the Holy Spirit** from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15). In

such a case, the person receives it without any prior conditions to be met. It is not something for which he works or prays; the Lord gives it as He pleases. Here in Ephesians 5:18 the believer is *commanded* to **be filled with the Spirit**. It involves action on his part. He must meet certain conditions. It is not automatic but the result of obedience.

For this reason the Spirit's filling should be distinguished from certain other of His ministries. It is *not* the same as any of the following functions:

1. *The baptism* by the Holy Spirit. This is the work of the Spirit which incorporates the believer in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
2. *The indwelling*. By this ministry the Comforter takes up His residence in the body of the Christian and empowers him for holiness, worship, and service (John 14:16).
3. *The anointing*. **The Spirit** Himself is the anointing who teaches the child of God the things of the Lord (1 John 2:27).
4. *The earnest and the seal*. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit as the earnest guarantees the inheritance for the saint, and as the seal He guarantees the saint for the inheritance (Eph. 1:13, 14).

These are some of the ministries of the Spirit which are realized in a person the moment he is saved. Everyone who is in Christ automatically has the baptism, the indwelling, the anointing, the earnest, and the seal.

But the filling is different. It is not a once-for-all crisis experience in the life of a disciple; rather it is a continuous process. The literal translation of the command is "Be being filled with the Spirit." It may begin as a crisis experience, but it must continue thereafter as a moment-by-moment process. Today's filling will not do for tomorrow. And certainly it is a state greatly to be desired. In fact, it is the ideal condition of the believer on earth. It means that the Holy Spirit is having His way relatively unopposed in the life of the Christian, and that the believer is therefore fulfilling his role in the plan of God for that time.

How then can a believer **be filled with the Spirit**? The Apostle Paul does not tell us here in Ephesians; he merely commands us to **be filled**. But from other parts of the word, we know that in order to **be filled with the Spirit** we must:

1. Confess and put away all known sin in our lives (1 John 1:5–9). It is obvious that such a holy Person cannot work freely in a life where sin is condoned.
2. Yield ourselves completely to His control (Rom. 12:1, 2). This involves the surrender of our will, our intellect, our body, our time, our talents, and our treasures. Every area of life must be thrown open to His dominion.
3. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). This involves reading the word, studying it, and obeying it. When the word of Christ dwells in us richly, the same results follow (Col. 3:16) as follow the filling of **the Spirit** (Eph. 5:19).
4. Finally, we must be emptied of self (Gal. 2:20). To be filled with a new ingredient a cup must first be emptied of the old. To **be filled with Him**, we must first be emptied of *us*.

An unknown author writes:

Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God.

Does a person know it when he is **filled with the Spirit**? Actually, the closer we are to the Lord, the more we are conscious of our own complete unworthiness and sinfulness (Isa. 6:1–5). In His presence, we find nothing in ourselves to be proud of (Luke 5:8). We are not aware of any spiritual superiority over

others, any sense of “having arrived.” The believer who is **filled with the Spirit** is occupied with Christ and not with self. At the same time, he may have a realization that God is working in and through his life. He sees things happen in a supernatural way. Circumstances click miraculously. Lives are touched for God. Events move according to a divine timetable. Even forces of nature are on his side; they seem chained to the chariot wheels of the Lord. He sees all this; he realizes that God is working for and through him; and yet he feels strangely detached from it all as far as taking any credit is concerned. In his inmost being, he realizes it is all of the Lord.

5:19 Now the apostle gives four results of being filled with the Spirit. First, Spirit-filled Christians speak **to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**. The divine infilling opens the mouth to talk about the things of the Lord, and enlarges the heart to share these things with others. While some see all three categories as parts of the Book of Psalms, we understand only **psalms** to mean the inspired writings of David, Asaph, and others. **Hymns** are noninspired songs which ascribe worship and praise directly to God. **Spiritual songs** are any other lyrical compositions dealing with spiritual themes, even though not addressed directly to God.

A second evidence of the filling is inward joy and praise to God: **singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**. The Spirit-filled life is a fountain, bubbling over with joy (Acts 13:52). Zacharias is an illustration: when he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he sang with all his heart to the Lord (Luke 1:67–79).

5:20 A third result is thanksgiving: **giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Where the Spirit reigns, there is gratitude **to God**, a deep sense of appreciation, and a spontaneous expression of it. It is not occasional, but continual. Not only for the pleasant things, but for all things. Anyone can be thankful for sunshine; it takes the power of the Spirit to be thankful for the storms of life.

The shortest, surest way to all happiness is this:

Make it a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity comes to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. If you could work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit: for it needs not a word spoken and turns all that it touches into happiness. (Selected)

5:21 The fourth test of being Spirit-filled is **submitting to one another in the fear of God**. Erdman admonishes:

It is a phrase too often neglected.... It names a test of spirituality which Christians too seldom apply.... Many persons feel that shouts of hallelujah and exulting songs and the utterance of praise in more or less “unknown tongues” are all proofs of being “filled with the Spirit.” These all may be spurious and deceitful and without meaning. Submission to our fellow Christians, modesty of demeanor, humility, unwillingness to dispute, forbearance, gentleness—these are the unmistakable proofs of the Spirit’s power.... Such mutual submission to their fellow Christians should be rendered “in the fear of Christ,” that is, in reverence to him who is recognized as the Lord and Master of all.

These then are four results of the Spirit’s filling—speaking, singing, thanking, and submitting. But there are at least four others:

1. Boldness in rebuking sin (Acts 13:9–12), and in testifying for the Lord (Acts 4:8–12, 31; 13:52–14:3).
2. Power for service (Acts 1:8; 6:3, 8; 11:24).
3. Generosity, not selfishness (Acts 4:31, 32).
4. Exaltation of Christ (Acts 9:17, 20) and of God (Acts 2:4, 11; 10:44, 46).

We should earnestly desire to be filled with the Spirit, but only for the glory of God, not for our own glory.³²

³² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1937–1947). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

S/G questions for June 20th

How can a God who commands His people not to bear false witness (Ex. 20:16), who condemns sinful men and Satan as liars (John 8:44; 1 Tim. 1:10), and who tells His people to put away lying and to “speak truth” (Eph. 4:25), possibly justify sending a “lying spirit” to accomplish His purposes?

MICAHIAH’S PRESENCE PROVIDES AN ANSWER

We saw in the story of Job that Satan himself could not act apart from the permissive will of God. Here we see God give permission to a “lying spirit,” surely not one of His holy angels, to go and deceive Ahab’s prophets and the king. The lying spirit was acting in harmony with his own moral bent, and the Lord permitted him to do so.

The rest of the story reveals that *God did not let even Ahab remain deceived!* Instead, God let Ahab and his prophets know the source of the prophecy that would have led this king to disaster. The “lying spirit” was permitted to tell his lie, but God made sure that Ahab knew the truth! Therefore, God can hardly be charged with using the lie to accomplish His purpose of punishing Ahab and ending his life.

AHAB AND HIS PROPHETS CHOSE TO BELIEVE THE LIE (*1 Kings 22:23–36*)

When Micaiah revealed the truth, Ahab’s prophets were angry with him. One of them even struck Micaiah in the face (22:24). King Ahab ordered that Micaiah be imprisoned and fed only bread and water until he returned victorious (22:27). But Micaiah had spoken the truth, and Ahab was killed in the battle with the Syrians (22:30–37). When given the choice between believing God’s truth or an evil spirit’s lie, the king and his prophets chose to believe the lie.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STORY OF THE LYING SPIRIT

We can draw the following principles from the story in 1 Kings 22:

- Evil spirits, like Satan himself, can act only with God’s permission. God did not send the lying spirit to Ahab’s prophets, but He did permit it to go.
- God did not rely on the lie to lead Ahab into a trap. In fact, God made sure that Ahab knew the truth through Micaiah.
- Ahab and his prophets chose to believe the lie, despite the fact that God made sure they knew the truth.
- God does not lie to accomplish His purposes; indeed, He counters Satan’s lies with a revelation of His truth. The tragedy is that, like Ahab, sinful human beings tend to believe the lie rather than the truth.³³

³³ Richards, L. (1997). [*Every angel in the Bible*](#) (p. 120). Nashville: T. Nelson.