

**Trinity Baptist Church**  
**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Andy Banks; The Effective Christian Life: The Spirit-filled Life**  
**Acts 1:4-8; Ephesians 5:8-11,15-20**

God must be wanting to say something to us because, without knowing it, Nigel laid the groundwork for today's sermon last week. We're continuing our series based on the Christian Life and Witness course, and today we're looking at how effective witness depends upon us living effective Christian lives. Let's read from Acts 1:4-8 and Ephesians 5:8-11,15-20.

**[Read Acts 1:4-8; Eph 5:8-11,15-20]**

**Acts 1:4** *On one occasion, while he was eating with them [that is, while Jesus was eating with his disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension], he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'*

*6Then they gathered round him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'*

*7He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*

**Eph 5:8** *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10and find out what pleases the Lord. 11Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them ...*

**15** *Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, 16making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**[Pray]**

"What is the chief and highest end of man?" So begins the 1647 Westminster Catechism. The Protestant Reformers revived the early Christian practice of teaching children and new converts the core truths of the Christian faith through catechisms – a set of doctrines to be learnt. So what answer is given to that important first question? This: "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever." The Christian Life and Witness Course begins similarly, "Every Christian is responsible for living a life that glorifies God and points others to him." "But," it goes on, "how can believers do that? Where do we start? What is involved in being used by God?" Similar questions occupied the minds of the first disciples: What is God's plan now that Jesus has been raised back to life? Is the Kingdom coming now? Will Israel's greatness be restored? What part are we to play in God's plans? When and how do we start?

But, as we heard last week, Jesus' first response was "wait." "Do *not* leave Jerusalem, but *wait* for the gift my Father promised." ... Why was it so important that they waited for this gift before they acted? Quite simply, because without the infilling of the Holy Spirit of God, we cannot fulfil God's plans for his Church. The *effective* Christian life is a *Spirit-filled* life. Jesus said, "you will receive power *when* the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you

will be *my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.*" The Holy Spirit is given so that the Church might witness effectively to Jesus Christ, crucified, resurrected and glorified.

Now, the Holy Spirit is God. He is the Third Person of the Trinity that is the One God. He is not a thing; he is a Person. And every Christian receives the Holy Spirit when they believe. Hence, Peter, at the end of his sermon at Pentecost, called to the crowds, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you *will* receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for *all* whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

The Spirit is given to *all* Christians. And yet, in Ephesians 5:18, Paul commands *believers*, "*be filled with the Spirit!*" In the original Greek that command is in the *present* tense, which signifies something to be obeyed not once, but over and over again. "*Be filled and go on being filled with the Spirit.*" And since it is *commanded*, it is both *essential* for the Christian life and something we must *actively seek!*

D. L. Moody was once asked why he urged Christians to be filled *constantly* with the Holy Spirit. "Well," he said, "I need a continual infilling because I leak!" He pointed to a water tank which had sprung a leak. "I'm like that!" he said. "It's a fact that living in this sinful world we do need to be replenished by the Spirit."

Moody's water tank illustrated his point at the time, but actually the water tank is not the best picture for the Holy Spirit's work in us. It suggests something static, which is filled to the brim for *us* and for *our* benefit. But Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, *rivers* of living water will *flow* from within them" (John 7:38), and John explains that he was picturing the work of the Holy Spirit. We are to be channels through whom the Holy Spirit flows to the world. There may be a pool in each of us where the water collects, but without the continual refilling, that pool will very quickly run dry.

Let me illustrate this with an Old Testament event. How did God dry up the rushing River Jordan for the Israelites to cross over to the Promised Land? He stopped the flow of the river upstream, so that it drained out where they were. It's like that with the river of the Spirit. To seek God's infilling is to allow the river to keep flowing into and through us. But Paul also warns us, "*do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*" (Ephesians 4:30). The context suggests that what grieves him most is sin, especially that which causes division in his Church. But when we grieve the Spirit, we inhibit his flow into our lives, like a dam in a river upstream. The denser we pack that dam, the harder it is for the Spirit to break through. So, when the Bible says "*Be filled and go on being filled with the Spirit*" it is a command for us to continuously take down the dam through repentance and forgiving others so as to enable the river of the Spirit to flow freely again.

#### 1) What is a Spirit-filled Life?

But what does a Spirit-filled life look like? I want to briefly mention five aspects: God's presence, God's reassurance, God's transformation, God's guidance, and God's power.

##### a) God's Presence

So, firstly, to live a Spirit-filled life, is to experience God's close *presence* day-by-day. Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and *be with you for ever* – the Spirit of truth ... you know him, for he lives *with* you and will be *in* you" (John 14:16-17). In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only came upon certain people and often only temporarily to enable them to perform a specific task, like prophesying. But Jesus' great promise is that the Holy Spirit will come to live inside all his followers, so that we might never face a second without God's presence with us! Wow!

b) God's Reassurance

Then, one of the Holy Spirit's most important roles is to *reassure* us of our place in God's family. Romans 8:16 says: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we *are* God's children." Our worth is defined by our unchangeable status as God's children, and the Holy Spirit in us constantly reminds us of this truth, and enables us to experience the blessings of relationship with our Father God.

c) God's Transformation

From the security of that relationship, the Spirit wants to *transform* us into the people God created us to be. So, he prods and prompts our mind with the truths of God's Word to call us to repentance and obedience. Romans 12:1-2 says: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." And, as we heard at last month's all-age service, the Spirit produces in us Christ-like characteristics. Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Paul continues: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us *keep in step* with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). God calls us to be active partners in the transformation he longs to bring about in us, to cooperate with the Spirit's promptings. Otherwise, we will stem the flow of the Spirit into our lives.

d) God's Guidance

Then, the Spirit also enables us to accurately interpret God's Word, which is the primary way that God speaks to us to transform us. Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). The Spirit enables us to understand and apply God's Word, and increasingly so, the more we read it. But, speaking personally, he does more than that. The result of my most *tangible* infilling of the Spirit was that I was given a *love* and *thirst* for God's Word, too. He turned a good *discipline* of daily Bible reading into a *joy* and a *delight*.

e) God's Power

Lastly, the Holy Spirit fills us with God's *power*. Acts 1:8: "But you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you." But that is not for ourselves; rather he empowers us to fulfil Jesus' call to be his *witnesses* to the world. Paul, likewise, spoke of the Spirit's anointing power upon his words. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in unlearned languages, thus opening hearts to hear their witness to Jesus. The Spirit also reinforces the Word of God through other gifts, like prophecy, healings and miracles, wisdom and such like (1 Cor 12:7-11). The effective Christian life is a Spirit-filled life.

2) How do we maintain a Spirit-filled Life?

But if this is so important, how do we maintain a Spirit-filled life? Again, I want to list just five key practices: Worship, prayer, reading God's Word, witness and fellowship. If these are in good balance in our lives, we will likely be living effective Christian lives.

a) Worship

Firstly, worship. The Romans 12 passage we read earlier begins Paul's practical "How to live as a Christian" section, and it starts with *worship*: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true *worship*." Worship is not just singing songs, though it includes it. Worship is the devotion of our whole lives, body, mind and spirit, to God. It glorifies God, but it also opens up a channel through which God can pour his Spirit into our lives and bless us.

## b) Prayer:

Secondly, prayer. Prayer is a two-way conversation with God, in which we speak and listen to what he says to us, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Often that may be a word of Scripture. Occasionally, it might be something else. I have a friend who was prevented from taking an overdose because another friend was prompted by the Spirit to go and see him at that exact moment. Our *spoken* prayers include adoration (or praise), confession of our sins, thanksgiving for answered prayer, and supplication – asking for things – all of which God loves us to do, and all of which give him the chance to work positively in our lives. Matt 7:7: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

## c) God’s Word:

Thirdly, as I’ve already said, it is vital that we read God’s word daily, for this is how we learn what God is like. And it also shines a light onto our lives such that we can discover what we are truly like – what in our lives pleases God, and what needs to change. 2 Tim 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” If you want some help with reading the Bible, you could speak to Joy Sanger, who orders Bible study materials for a number of people. But to maintain the Spirit’s flow in our lives we must not merely hear God’s Word, we must also *obey* what we hear. James 1:22: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” Or, as God says elsewhere, “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16)

## d) Witness:

Fourthly, since the Spirit is given so that we can be Jesus’ witnesses (Acts 1:8), it follows that, if we wish to maintain a Spirit-filled life, we should be open to sharing our faith, praying for opportunities to do so, and courageously taking those opportunities as they come along. God will bless most with his Holy Spirit those who are willing to be his channels through whom he can bring a blessing to others.

## e) Fellowship:

And lastly, fellowship with other believers. Fellowship is not just turning up to church and being *with* other believers. Fellowship means getting to know one another, being real with one another, so that we can truly encourage and support one another in the Christian life. Hebrews 10:24-25 says: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Of course, it is far easier to do this if we are regularly meeting one another. So, if you haven’t yet returned to in-person church, I would urge you to do so, to both receive and give the benefits of fellowship.

In summary, the effective Christian life is a Spirit-filled life. This is the life that pleases and glorifies God, which is our chief end as humans. It is characterised by enjoying God’s presence, reassurance, transformation, guidance and power. And it is maintained among other things by regular worship, prayer, Bible reading, witness and fellowship. So would you like to be filled, or filled afresh, with the Holy Spirit today?

**[Pray  
Opportunity to be filled with the Spirit]**