

EPHESIANS 5:15-21
THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”¹

Among contemporary churches we have witnessed a pronounced emphasis on worship during the past several decades. Undoubtedly, the renewed emphasis on worship is in many ways commendable; however, it is greatly to be feared that much of what is presented as worship in contemporary churches falls far short of a biblical standard. Too often, modern Christians confuse entertainment and worship. Routinely, the effectiveness of worship is subjected to a criterion that more properly reflects the world’s standard rather than appealing to a biblical standard. Thus, worship is too often judged on the basis of personal enjoyment; what is presented seems more frequently to glorify the performers instead of glorifying the Living God. It almost seems that worship teams have adopted an adversarial role against those appointed to proclaim the Word. Thus, performance and proclamation are set in competition.

The use of worship teams and praise choruses has too often become a means to showcase an individual or a group rather than leading the worshippers into the sanctuary of the Lord. The music chosen seems often to be designed to generate an outcome rather than to honour the Master. Repeating a chorus or a phrase is geared more to inducing a hypnotic state than encouraging thoughtful worship. In time, the melody and/or the rhythm has become more important than the theology of what is sung. We have drifted so far from biblical concepts that I question whether we any longer know what it means to worship the Lord in the splendour of holiness.

Before we actually look at the text, take note of one significant fact. Within the pastorate are many who have emphasised the necessity of avoiding drunkenness. In urging this caution, pastors have frequently appealed to the eighteenth verse that warns, “Do not get drunk with wine.” However, if we concede that this text debars inebriation, then we must be equally adamant that it demands that believers be “filled with the Spirit.” The verse does not present an either/or situation; rather it points out a both/and condition. Paul commands believers to “be filled with the Spirit.”

In the following verses are found five participles: (1) addressing one another; (2) singing; (3) making melody; (4) giving thanks; and (5) submitting. In short, Paul is informing Christians how they can know that they are “filled with the Spirit.” If you will, he is telling us how to recognise Spirit-filled worship. The participles point to the result of being filled by the Spirit. Join me in study of these brief instructions that reveal the church at worship so that we may learn how to worship in a manner pleasing to God.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP REQUIRES MUTUAL MINISTRY — “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.” One of the weaknesses of the modern worship movement is that the focus is on the worshipper. How the worshipper feels and what he or she experiences is central to the movement. Throughout the New Testament, however, the focus is the Master, and in all worship described in the New Testament there is an emphasis upon the shared or corporate experience. Together, the congregation of the Lord seeks to recognise His presence and as a body presents their service to Him.

Reviewing the text, it is difficult to draw any other conclusion than that worship that fails to serve others is incomplete, or perhaps is even defective. Worship that builds only the worshipper is unworthy of Him who loved the church and gave Himself for her. One must be struck by the instructions provided to us in the Apostle’s First Letter to the Corinthian Christians. Listen once again to the opening words of the fourteenth chapter.

“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5].

The focus for those participating in worship is to build others through edification (or strengthening), encouragement and consolation. “Others” must be the focus of those who would worship acceptably. I will be very bold to say that those who worship in spirit and in truth are focused outward seeking the benefit of others. When I come before the Lord, it is not about me. If I am focused on the Master, I will see others as I serve in His Name. Not only will I see others, but I will esteem them highly in love.

Let’s take a moment to think about the congregation of the Lord in relationship to who we are and what our purpose is. Paul compares the congregation to a body. In fact, Paul refers to the local congregation as “the Body of Christ” [1 CORINTHIANS 12:27]. We are accustomed to thinking of the Body of Christ as a universal entity, but the only other place in the New Testament where this particular term is used is more properly applied in a generic sense to the local congregation [see EPHESIANS 4:12]. Precision compels me to point out this fact, encouraging you to see that God’s ideal is that the local congregation should reflect the reality of Christ’s spiritual rule over the assembly.

We err if we attempt to reduce the congregation of the Lord to an organisation, neglecting the fact that the congregation is a spiritual entity. It is a tragic observation that many believers in modern churches have hindered congregational effectiveness through imposing cultural restraints, focusing attention on the organisational structure as dictated by government decree rather than emphasising the spiritual structure created by the Lord. Whenever an individual is saved, the Spirit of God gifts the individual and places him or her where He desires. Listen to what is written in the Word. “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” [1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7].

Pause for a moment and consider the information that the Apostle has provided. First, Christians are not identical—we are not produced via the “cookie-cutter method.” We are each gifted differently—but we are each gifted. It would be very boring indeed if everyone within a given congregation were all alike. Can you imagine a church composed only of preachers? Fortunately, God equips each of us so that *together* we are enabled to reflect the character of Christ. No one of us can ever fully express the full character of the Master, but together, as we are empowered and enabled by the Spirit of the Lord, we are equipped and appointed to reflect the glory of the Master.

Within any New Testament assembly will be individuals who are gifted with generosity, others who are gifted with compassion, and yet others who will exhibit exceptional faith. This does not mean that we are not to be generous, excusing ourselves by saying that we haven’t the gift of generosity. Likewise, we are responsible to walk by faith and to be a compassionate people. Nevertheless, there will always be some among us that lead in these areas because the Spirit of God equipped them to do so.

Take note that the gifts are precisely that—gifts. These are qualities that were not present before in the various members of the Body. These qualities may be cultivated in the individuals making up the Body, but they are given to the members for the benefit of all the members. The gifts are given that all the members might be blessed.

Again, there is no priority of one gift over another—there are neither superior nor inferior gifts given by the Spirit of God. Occasionally, I have heard people opine that they are not important because they consider their gift to be inferior. However, the Spirit of God gives each gift “as He wills” [1 CORINTHIANS 12:11] and it is God who has appointed your position in the assembly [see 1 CORINTHIANS 12:28]. Therefore, since the gifts are given “for the common good” [1 CORINTHIANS 12:7] there can be no inferior or superior gifts. The gifts are given as God determines, they are given for the benefit of all within the assembly, and they are divinely bestowed. Therefore, the gifts of the Spirit are vital, each one being absolutely necessary for congregational health and completeness.

It is important to stress that no member of the Body is superfluous. We pay scant attention to our toenails—they are not attractive, they seldom generate much excitement. However, should the cuticle become infected due to a hangnail, we are immediately conscious of our toenails. If these “needless parts” must be surgically removed due to repeated infections, we are suddenly made aware of the value of the toenails. They seem so insignificant, until they hurt. The reality of the Apostle’s assertion cannot be ignored. “God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” [1 CORINTHIANS 12:24b-26].

However, what may be the most significant information implied by the Apostle’s words is that together—*and only together*—we reflect what Christ is. There is no perfect church; but that does not excuse us from labouring diligently to fully express the presence of Christ. He is the Head of the Church, and each congregation needs to think long and hard about whether He is the Head of that particular assembly. There are no bosses to run the church, nor even a committee to make things happen. Rather, God seeks to exercise His will through the congregation as the members submit to the mind of the Spirit. This means nothing less than investing time together to prayerfully ask what the will of the Lord is and how that will is to be expressed collectively through the assembly.

Because this is true, as members of the Body we must each accept responsibility to fulfil the ministry God has given us to build one another, to encourage one another, and to console one another. If we will witness Spirit-filled worship in the congregation, each of us must focus on others rather than on ourselves.

Let me speak pointedly to this issue for a brief moment. Worship is not about me. Worship is about honouring Christ the Lord. What I “feel” is immaterial in assessing whether I have worshipped or not. Worship that is Spirit-filled will look to the welfare of those who share in the Body life with me, seeking their welfare. The writers of the New Testament emphasised the mutual service to one another that is woefully neglected among contemporary Christians. With our emphasis on self-fulfilment we are effectively ignorant of our biblical responsibility.

We who are Christians “ought to love one another” [1 JOHN 4:7, 11]. Consequently, because we love one another, we also have and should expect to enjoy “fellowship with one another” [1 JOHN 1:7]. Loving one another and having fellowship with one another, we will eagerly “greet one another” [1 PETER 5:14] and “show hospitality to one another” [1 PETER 4:9]. We will also “be kind to one another” [EPHESIANS 4:32]. These truths should mark every Christian. However, if these marks are present, we are not really distinguished from good friends in the world.

Therefore, we must “serve one another” [1 PETER 4:10], “confess [our] sins to one another and pray for one another” [JAMES 5:16]. If we will honour God we will not “grumble against one another” [JAMES 5:9]; neither will we “speak evil against one another” [JAMES 4:11] nor “pass judgement on one another any longer” [ROMANS 14:13]. Rather, we will endeavour to “encourage one another,” especially by reminding each other of the words of Scripture [1 THESSALONIANS 4:18]. We will also “build one another” [1 THESSALONIANS 5:11], and we will “exhort one another” [HEBREWS 3:13], even as we “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works” [HEBREWS 10:24].

In a more personal sense, we will accept the responsibility to teach and admonish one another [COLOSSIANS 3:16] just as we will bear with one another and forgive one another [COLOSSIANS 3:13]. We will not lie to one another [COLOSSIANS 3:9]. Because as members of the assembly we “belong to one another”² [ROMANS 12:5], we will make every effort to “live in harmony with one another” and we will “outdo one another in showing honour” [ROMANS 12:16].

Too often modern churches appear as though they were counted among the Churches of Galatia as the members bite and devour one another, consuming one another [see GALATIANS 5:15], provoking one another and envying one another [see GALATIANS 5:26]. In no small measure, this condition prevails because the membership of the congregations is focused on personal fulfilment rather than on service. They seek a personal experience in worship rather than realising the corporate aspect of the Faith. However, Spirit-filled worship is always expressed through mutual service.

You can gauge the quality of your worship by asking yourself whether as result of your worship others have been made stronger in their faith, whether because of the time you invested others have been encouraged, or whether through spending time together in the presence of the Lord others have received consolation. Frankly, if others were not benefitted through your time invested in “worship,” you did not honour the Lord—you cannot say that you have worshipped.

² The NET Bible First Edition (Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2006)

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP UNITES WORSHIPPERS IN LOOKING TO GOD — “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Worship in the Spirit is marked by service to one another. To be certain, Spirit-filled worshippers edify one another, encourage one another and console one another through addressing one another, citing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, through singing and making melody to the Lord, and through cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

In order to explore the Apostle’s meaning, consider a parallel passage. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” [COLOSSIANS 3:16]. Here, also, Paul urges “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” and cultivating a thankful heart. However, he prefaces that admonition by urging Christians to ensure that the Word of God enriches their lives, apparently through familiarising themselves with what is written and through memorising and meditating on the Word. Then, filled with the knowledge of the Word, believers are commanded to teach and admonish one another. Singing is meant to communicate truth. It is not meant to be primarily a means of making us feel good about ourselves; rather it flows out of the requirement to teach and admonish one another.

Do not rush past a truth that has already been emphasised and is again stressed here: *it is the community of faith together that is filled with the Spirit*. Being filled with the Spirit is not meant to be an individualistic experience. Pauline theology teaches that being filled with the Spirit is a corporate experience for the people of God. Shortly before writing the words of our text Paul cautioned that we can corporately grieve the Spirit. He wrote, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” [EPHESIANS 4:30-32]. The verbs are plural as the Apostle addresses the congregation rather than individuals.

Notice that Paul uses five participles that are grammatically dependent upon the imperative of being filled with the Spirit—addressing, singing, psalming, giving thanks, and submitting. What we are given is a means of testing whether worship is Spirit-filled or whether we are merely going through the motions. In the first place, Spirit-filled worshippers are addressing one another in order to communicate divine truth. The word Paul uses is frequently used to describe his apostolic service.

“Addressing one another” translates the same word that Paul chose when he sought to impress on the Corinthians the nature of his service as an Apostle. “Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory” [1 CORINTHIANS 2:6, 7].

Listen as he writes them on another occasion defending the ministry he presents. “We are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ” [2 CORINTHIANS 2:17]. This service is iterated when he writes, “It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding” [2 CORINTHIANS 12:19].

Let me give one further example of the Apostle's use of this word as found in the First Letter to the Thessalonian Christians. "Though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts" [1 THESSALONIANS 2:2-4]. Here, the word specifically applies to the declaration of the Gospel of God. In fact, he says that his speech is not aimed at pleasing man, but rather his focus is to please God.

In the First Letter to Corinthian Christians, the Apostle states that speaking is the way to build up the congregation. This is the means of communicating divine truth within the congregation. In point of fact, the Ephesians are to "speak the truth" with their neighbour because within the church "we are members one of another" [EPHESIANS 4:25]. Establish in your mind, then, that Spirit-filled worship is marked by the worshippers communicating divine truth to one another, citing the Word of God and appealing to what is written. What I think is immaterial; what God has caused to be written is paramount.

Paul does address the hymnody of the church. The immediate audience of the church's singing is the community of believers; the second obvious audience is the Master. The verb "making melody" is literally "psalming" in the original language. Moreover, when he urges believers to sing and make melody "with your heart," he is not encouraging silent worship, but rather he is urging Christians to sing with heartfelt expression from the depth of our being where Christ the Lord has taken up residence in our lives. The entire person should be filled with songs of praise. In this way, we are expressing the reality of life in the Spirit, for the presence of the Spirit causes joy.

Don't tell me that you cannot sing because you are sad. When Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi, they sang a hymn to God: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God." Take note of what follows, for it reminds us that someone always listens: "and the prisoners were listening to them" [ACTS 16:25].

It is not possible that each of us should be a preacher; however, each of us can sing heartily. And in doing so, we address one another and we address the Master. Through hearty singing we are strengthening one another, encouraging one another and consoling one another. I do need to take a moment to take note of what is to be sung. Frequently, among modern churches the singing depends upon simplistic phrases that may or may not be faithful to the Word. Much of contemporary music depends upon repetition of phrases and musical themes in an apparent attempt to generate a feeling.

I am not suggesting that melody is unimportant or that what is sung must be wooden. I am saying, in agreement with the Apostle, that what is sung must be faithful to the Word of God. We do not have freedom to alter the revealed will of God through singing what we want. Specifically, Paul urges the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." *Psalms* may refer to either the Old Testament Psalms or more generally any song of praise.³ Unquestionably, the psalms sung in the earliest churches used the Book of Psalms as a prototype. *Hymns* were used of any festive song of praise.⁴ *Songs* is used to describe a song in which God's acts are praised and glorified.⁵

³ See 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26 ("hymn" translates the Greek term, or *psalmós* "psalm"); COLOSSIANS 3:16

⁴ See ACTS 16:25; HEBREWS 2:12

⁵ Cf. REVELATION 5:9, 10; 14:3; 15:3, 4

An aspect of modern church music that is missing is the fact that in the early church, the congregants sang to one another! “Early in the second century, Pliny in writing to Emperor Trajan indicated his knowledge that Christians were accustomed ‘to sing (recite) a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to (a) god’ (*carmenque Christo quasi deo secum invicem*).”⁶ Let’s put together what we have discovered. Christians gathered in worship and filled with the Spirit, speak and sing to one another, reminding each other of what God has done in Christ the Lord. Thus, we discover that singing is to have both a horizontal and a vertical focus: we are to instruct each other within the believing community, and we are to praise and adore God. Worship is not complete until it has fulfilled both functions of instruction and praise.

Spirit-filled worship will be marked by gratitude to God. The Apostle urges “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Giving thanks is to be continual—we are to see God’s hand at work among us always. We are to recognise that our lives are not controlled by serendipity or accident; rather we are to recognise purpose in life as God works to glorify His Name. Therefore, we are to be thankful in every circumstance. And our gratitude is to be directed to the Father.

The NET BIBLE stands alone in offering a fascinating suggestion concerning what we should be thankful for when it translates the twentieth verse: “always giving thanks to God the Father for each other in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The translators correctly note that the Greek word *pántōn*, translated “everything” and implying “all,” can be either neuter or masculine. I’m not convinced that the translation is correct; but it certainly points out that we should give thanks for one another. If we are the Body of Christ, if Christ is the Head of the Body, and if the Spirit gifts each of us and places us within His Body, assigning the tasks that He has determined are needful and beneficial, then how can we not give thanks for one another? Mark in your mind that a grateful attitude is a significant mark of Spirit-filled worship.

SPRIT-FILLED WORSHIP CREATES A SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION — “Be filled with the Spirit ... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” I have purposely reserved discussion of this fifth and final participle because of the controversial nature of this aspect of Spirit-filled worship. Not only is a submissive attitude indicative of a Spirit-filled individual, but it is foundational for all that the Apostle will shortly teach concerning relationships within the home.

Despite a biblical emphasis, few Canadians want to be submissive toward anyone. We resent any suggestion that we are to be submissive, resisting any hint of submission toward anyone. Perhaps this is because few of us understand the biblical concept of submission; perhaps it is because we have distorted the meaning so dreadfully in this day.

I recall a wedding that I performed some years ago; he was a teacher and she was a lawyer. When they first came to speak with me, she was adamant that she would not vow to be submissive toward him. I was equally adamant that I would not participate in a wedding in which she did not pledge proper respect for him, just as I would not officiate a wedding in which I questioned his commitment to love her as himself. After discussing what the Bible teaches, her mind was put at ease and there was no further resistance.

⁶ Gerald L. Borchert, “The Lord of Form and Freedom: A New Testament Perspective on Worship,” *Review and Expositor* Volume 80, 1983, pg. 14

The term that is translated “submitting” is a military term that refers to ordering oneself under a leader. The concept of submission, as presented by the Word, is a concept of orderly arrangement of persons that recognises the division of labour. The concept is recognition of order—in the home, in the church and ultimately even in the Godhead. Paul writes the Corinthian Christians, “I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” [1 CORINTHIANS 11:3]. If we confess that Christ is the Head of every individual and that He has voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father, how is it that we have difficulty with the thought that we must voluntarily arrange ourselves in the congregation and in the family?

In the church, there is an orderly arrangement as the Spirit of God appoints whom He wills to various services within the congregation. Submission does not imply that one person is superior or another inferior, for submission says nothing about character; it is recognition of differences in ability and acceptance of differing responsibilities. Each member of the Body has received gifts from the Spirit of God for the benefit of all the members. Nevertheless, within the congregation there are elders assigned by God to provide oversight for the flock and deacons assigned to perform tasks as they serve the congregation. Submission accepts God’s appointment to these differing tasks. If there is resistance to this charge, surely it is because of ignorance. Otherwise, it demonstrates a rebellious attitude that defies God’s rule over the Body. Or perhaps it is a symbol of pride that resists God’s choice and work among us.

Christians have received the charge, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” [HEBREWS 13:17]. Unfortunately, many Christians have the idea that they “hire” whom they will and the pastors “work” for the bosses. Thus, too often pastors are compelled to obey the ersatz elders who have assumed their positions because of their wealth or as result of long presence in the church, and no oversight is provided for the congregation.

In the home, submission is not an issue of superiority or inferiority, but a matter of division of responsibility and appointment to different labours. Shortly, in this letter, we will read, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” [EPHESIANS 5:22-24]. This instruction is echoed in Peter’s first letter. “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the Word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives” [1 PETER 3:1].

A wife’s submission is offered to her own husband and not to men in general. Her submission is voluntary—it cannot be compelled. Moreover, the submission of wives exhibits understanding of spiritual responsibility; she submits to her own husband “as to the Lord.” A wife is urged to offer her submission to her husband in recognition of the responsibility he bears as head of the family with responsibility to lead the family in spiritual matters. Submission for a wife is in one area only, and that is in spiritual matters. This command says nothing about finances, domestic duties or the workplace. Perhaps one reason submission is so odious among Christian families is the failure of men to assume responsibility as leaders in spiritual issues. Nevertheless, wives are commanded to cultivate this spirit of submission to their own husbands.

It should be obvious that Christians are responsible to be good citizens, being submissive to governmental authorities. Peter instructs believers, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people” [1 PETER 2:13-15]. This command echoes Paul’s instruction, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed” [ROMANS 13:1, 2].

Submission cannot be properly understood, and certainly cannot be embraced, in a life that is not Spirit-filled. The context is worship, but the implication is for the general conduct of the Christian community. Christians that are Spirit-filled demonstrate a submissive attitude toward one another—they are considerate, loving, gentle toward one another. They act in this way “out of reverence for Christ.” They fear the Lord—they recognise His reign over His people, and they reveal that they recognise His presence by their attitude toward one another.

A church that is Spirit-filled will focus on serving one another, building one another through addressing the cares and concerns each member has. A Spirit-filled church will be a joyful church, heartily singing and making melody to the Lord. A Spirit-filled church is a church that is thankful. A Spirit-filled church is a church in which a spirit of submission marks the congregation as they consider one another and esteem one another. A Spirit-filled church takes seriously the scriptural injunction, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” [PHILIPPIANS 2:3].

If ours is not a Spirit-filled church, it may be because of ignorance. However, if we have received the Word today, we no longer have an excuse for such ignorance. On the other hand, if the members of the congregation are not Spirit-filled, it may be because the Spirit of God does not dwell within the various members. There is only one reason that the Spirit of God would not live in the life of an individual, and that is because they have never been born from above. If that describes you, you must hear this final plea.

You must be born again. Christ Jesus sacrificed His life because of your sin. In love, He took upon Himself all your sin and all the perversity of your life, dying because of you. That is a wonderful expression of divine love, but it has no power if He did not conquer death and rise from the dead. The Word of God is quite clear in declaring that He did conquer death, rising from the dead. Now, we boldly preach the Resurrected Christ as the Saviour of all who are willing to receive Him.

Therefore, the Word of God presents the divine promise, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” That promise concludes by testifying that, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].

Our prayer is that you have believed this message and that you are even now a Christian. If you are a believer, we urge you to openly confess your faith, identifying with Christ the Lord through baptism as He commands. Seek out the assembly where He wills you to serve, and invest your life there building other and receiving the ministry that they offer. Seek to live out the life of the Spirit together as the people of God. Amen.