

Gifts Of The Holy Spirit

'To each one is given the manifestation of the Holy Spirit for good and for profit. To one is given through the Holy Spirit, a word of wisdom and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Holy Spirit. To another, faith by the same Holy Spirit, to another the gift of healing by the one Holy Spirit. To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy. To another the discernment between true and false spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the ability to interpret such tongues. All these gifts are from the same Holy Spirit, Who distributes gifts to each person as He chooses' (1 Corinthians 12:7 to 11).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit have always been there in the New Testament and they have always been available to Christians, yet for over a thousand years, the gifts were not used. In the last few decades there has been a new discovery of these gifts and in almost every Christian church around the world we find increasing numbers of people using these spiritual gifts. They are gifts. They cannot be earned. They are not merit badges. They are given by God at His sovereign discretion and they must be received by us through faith. It does not take any time to acquire spiritual gifts, although it may take time for the person to understand how, where and when to use the gift God has given to them. Just as salvation is a free gift, once they are given, the Lord never withdraws them; they are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). These gifts are available to all of us if we walk close to God.

These gifts are given to every believer for the edification of the church. The Holy Spirit is indwelling and cannot be seen by the believer, but these gifts can be heard by believers. Healings and miracles can be seen. When these gifts are manifest, we can be made aware of the Holy Spirit by our senses. The gifts are divine supernatural manifestations of God Himself in the Person of the Holy Spirit and they are on a higher level than natural human ability. They can be divided into three groups: (1) The divine revelations from God. They are words of wisdom, words of knowledge and the discerning of spirits. (2) The gifts of power; faith, miracles and healing. (3) The vocal gifts of prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

There are four main purposes for these gifts. One is: They make room for God's sovereignty. He is the Source of our gifts. God is in supreme control of His church and does not want humans to rule the church. Through these gifts, God can manifest His sovereignty; His ultimate control of the whole church. The gifts lift us above the realm of our natural ability. The book of Acts is the only scriptural and historical record of the birth of the new church; the new covenant written in the blood of Jesus (Luke 22:20). If we remove all reference to the supernatural from the book of Acts, not one of the 28 chapters would be left intact. That shows us that Christianity is a supernatural faith and we can never live our lives as committed Christians, purely on the natural level.

Another purpose of the spiritual gifts is to confirm our testimony of Jesus Himself and the spiritual gifts will continue until the end of the age, that is until our Messiah comes again; the day of our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:6 to 8). Purpose number three is: These gifts enable all people to contribute for the common good of the church. 'When you meet together, each one has a Psalm, a teaching, a word of knowledge, a tongue or an interpretation of a tongue, but let everything be edifying for the good of all' (1 Corinthians 14:26). When the gifts are available, the believers do not come to church only to listen, but to contribute – to edify and be edified.

Then the fourth purpose is to direct. The word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are very similar but they are different. Wisdom is directive, knowledge is informative. The purpose of wisdom is to give us a correct direction. All through the Bible, wisdom and knowledge are intertwined. God has all wisdom and all knowledge, but He only imparts to us a tiny portion, just a word. The apostles and other disciples were having a heated debate regarding the salvation of Gentiles. In the midst of this debate, God gave James a word of wisdom. Through that word of wisdom, the mind of God was revealed to God's people at that vital turning point in church history. The word of wisdom produced complete harmony amongst God's people. Three times in that chapter, it is written 'it seemed good'. The word of wisdom brought them together in one mind. They knew they had the mind of God imparted to them by the Holy Spirit. That gave them clear direction and complete unity which was essential for the progress of the early church (Acts 15:6 to 41).

A remarkable and fearful example of God giving a word of knowledge to one of His servants is also found in Acts. A couple named Ananias and Sapphira were trying to cheat God. They were free to give as much as they wanted to, but they were not free to try to deceive God. This knowledge from God brought conviction upon the couple so that they could not live and the life went from them. Peter received the knowledge directly from the Holy Spirit. This situation prevented the church from being infiltrated by hypocrisy and kept the church honest before God. It brought conviction upon the non-believers and showed them that God really was in the midst of His people (Acts 4:34 through to 5:1 to 11). Through these two examples, we can see the clear difference between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is called the Finger of God, and using a word of knowledge can touch directly on a problem.

The discerning of spirits recognise, identify and distinguish between various kinds of spirits that confront us. The Christian ministry is a ministry in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 6:12). The gift of discernment uncovers the unseen spiritual world – it lifts the veil and enables us to see as God sees. 'The Lord sees, not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7). With discernment, we are able to penetrate through and see the condition of the heart attitude of a person and we can see any evil influence within that person. Discernment protects us from deception. It helps us to diagnose people's problems so we can help them. One example is epilepsy. If a person comes to us for prayer, Christians with discernment should be able to discern whether or not the epilepsy is an illness or an evil spirit. The gift of discernment of spirits is not just the discerning of evil spirits. There are four kinds of spirits that confront us in the Christian walk. There is the Holy Spirit; there are angels; there are unclean spirits and there is the human spirit and we need to know the difference. Jesus discerned that Nathanael had a guileless spirit, with no deceit, falsehood or duplicity (John 1:47). Paul was the only person who saw the angel in Acts 27:23. When Paul and the other apostles were in Philippi, they were annoyed by a girl who was possessed by an evil spirit of divination, or fortune telling (Acts 16:12, 16 to 18). What the girl was saying was absolutely true. That is an example of the devil coming as an angel of light. Paul cast the spirit out of the girl, and he spoke directly to the spirit, not to the girl, and the spirit had to obey him because he spoke with divine authority. It was the gift of discernment that showed Paul what he was dealing with.

The gifts of power are faith, healing and miracles. We need the gift of faith to perform miracles and healing. Faith is presented in the New Testament in a few different forms. There is faith to live by. The righteous shall live by faith (Galatians 3:11). This faith is ongoing belief and commitment to God and it supplies the direction for the whole Christian life. This is the faith that every Christian has to have, in order to be a Christian. There is the fruit of faith (Galatians 5:22) which is an aspect of character. There is the gift of faith which is the supernatural faith. It is God's faith imparted by the sovereign will of God by the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed all three forms of faith. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, He just spoke to the tree (Matthew 21:19 to 21). He did not shout or do anything else. When the disciples questioned Jesus, He just said to have faith in God; or have God's faith; have the faith God has. This gift of faith is a tiny mustard seed of God's faith. It is divine faith supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is not on the quantity of faith but on the quality, or depth of faith.

Gifts of healings is the healing power of God, imparted by the one who has the gift, into the person who is sick. That is replacing sickness with health. Jesus spent much of His ministry on earth healing the sick and casting out demons, which always resulted in the person being healed. Healing the sick and healing through the casting out of demons, also known as deliverance, has never ceased being the will of God. Jesus never once turned away a sick person who came to Him for healing, and He nearly always laid His hands on them when they were brought to Him. Those He healed from a distance were healed by His spoken Word. Jesus always said it is His will for the sick to be healed (Luke 4:40). Supernatural healing power emanated from the body of Jesus, and when that power went from Him to heal someone, Jesus could actually feel it (Luke 8:46). Jesus had the healing power (Luke 5:17) but it took faith and determination on behalf of the woman to press in through the crowd before she could be healed. Then Jesus told the woman, her faith had made her well again. When Jesus went from village to village, healing people along the way, we can see that a location can be permeated by the power of God for healing. On the other hand, unbelief can stop healings taking place (Matthew 13:58). The Lord gave Peter a remarkable gift of healing, so powerful, that when his shadow passed over people they were healed (Acts 5:15 & 16). Paul also had a gift of healing the sick (Acts 28:8 & 9). Jesus told the disciples to heal the sick (Matthew 10:8). Jesus did not say, "Ask Me to heal the sick", He did not say, "Pray to God to heal them", He told them to heal the sick. We as Christians have to face up to this obligation. We should not ask God to heal the sick – we must do it, through the faith imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. Some people, especially TV evangelists, believe they can only heal by shoving people over backwards. That is not healing; that is self-gratifying showmanship to increase their financial fortunes, and the poor hapless victim is not usually healed anyway. If a person is genuinely overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit and weakens to the point where they cannot stand, then that is a blessing and that is our sovereign Lord ministering to that individual. We need the Spirit of discernment to distinguish between the genuine falling under the power of the Holy Spirit – and the deceptive shoving over of people who are seeking healing.

Some people have the gift of the working of miracles. Healings may be gradual, and can be invisible if they take place internally, but miracles are visual, instant healings that take place immediately prayer has been offered. If it is internal, the person knows immediately they have been healed. People who are not sick can sometimes need healing. Someone who is well but in a wheelchair can be healed so they can walk. A fit and healthy blind or deaf person may not be sick, but would benefit from a miracle. Jesus performed a creative miracle when he healed a man born blind (John 9:1 to 11). Humans were created out of dirt, clay, dust or whatever one may want to call it, and Jesus made mud from the earth and His saliva, smeared it as ointment on the man's eyes and told the man to wash specifically, in the Pool of Siloam. In obedience, the man

washed and his sight was created. We do not know if the man had unseeing eyes, or if his eye sockets were empty. What we do know is, Jesus used a creative method to heal the man, but the man was only healed after he washed. Often, when we need a miracle, we need to do something in obedience before the miracle takes place. 'When Jesus saw them He said to them, "Go at once and show yourselves to the priests." As they went, they were healed' (Luke 17:14). The same applied in the Old Testament. 'Elisha sent a message to him saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. Your flesh will be restored and you will be clean"' (2 Kings 5:10). Peter and John said the same thing to a man who was lame. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk!" (Acts 3:6). Imagine telling a lame person to walk. That was a miracle, not just a healing. It takes an act of faith to impart a healing or a miracle, just as it takes faith to receive a healing or a miracle.

Vocal gifts are prophecy, tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Prophecy is the ability granted supernaturally by the Holy Spirit to a believer, to speak forth words that proceed from God; words that do not come from the believers own wisdom, understanding, reasoning or education. Prophecy has been exercised by God's people right from the beginning of the Bible. There are two distinct types of prophecy. One is to speak God's will or His divine knowledge over a person – the other is to edify the church through encouragement. In the Old Testament, a vocalised blessing over a child was often a prophecy. Isaac blessed Jacob through prophecy and was unable to reverse his words for Esau (Genesis 27:1 to 40). In that example, Isaac was vocalising God's divine knowledge about the life of Jacob, and we know that Jesus came through the bloodline of Jacob and Isaac knew his words could not be reversed. Zachariah prophesied about his newborn son John the Baptist, and Elizabeth's nephew Jesus, Who was not yet born, but was already our Horn of Salvation (Luke 1:67 to 79).

In the early church and still in this day, when a believer speaks the will of God, those words are used to edify the church. If the prophecy does not edify and build up God's people then it is not from the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1). Prophecy is never to be used to tell people what to do. That never comes from God. He is not a dictator and anyone who does that is not from God. That is why all prophetic utterances are to be subject to judgement – not the prophet – but the words (1 Corinthians 14:29). We are not to reject prophecies altogether, and we are not to believe all of them with out examining them (1 Thessalonians 5:19 to 21). The scriptural tests to determine the truth of a prophecy is to ask if the prophecy agrees with scripture. The Holy Spirit is the Author of scripture and will never contradict Himself and will never say anything through prophecy that is contrary to scripture. The second test is to ask if the prophecy reveals and edifies Jesus, for that is the primary ministry of prophecy in the New Testament church. Any prophecy that does not edify Jesus is not from the Holy Spirit. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of all prophecy (Revelation 19:10). All true prophecy is centred around Jesus. The third test is to ask if the prophecy edifies God's people. The Old Testament prophets, prophesied about the birth, life, death, resurrection and second coming of Jesus. The whole of Jesus' life and ministry was prophetic. In the church, prophecies can be used to guide people into ministry. Timothy was appointed to his ministry by the laying on of hands and prophecy (1 Timothy 4:14). Timothy was required to do things according to the inspirational prophecies he received (1 Timothy 1:18). We have to be careful about directive prophecy – it must not be the only guidance in our lives. It is better to have two or three different ways to receive guidance, and prophecy should be only one of the ways to guide us into God's will and holy calling on our life and ministry.

The gift of unknown tongues can also be called the gift of languages. Tongues are fully supernatural. The natural understanding cannot comprehend how we can speak in a language we have never learned. The first time speaking in tongues was recorded in the Bible, was on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4) as the Holy Spirit gave them words to speak. Tongues are different to prophecy. The believer has not learned the language and usually cannot understand what is being said, but someone nearby can often understand the language, if it is in their known language (Acts 2:8 to 11). Tongues can be the language of people or of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). There are various kinds of tongues and different tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10 & 28). There are different uses for tongues. Two uses in these verses are for direct personal communication with God, and to edify oneself (1 Corinthians 14:2 & 4). Another use is as a supernatural witness to unbelievers and to convict them of sin, leading them to worship God (1 Corinthians 14:14 to 25).

When tongues and interpretation are used together, it is the equivalent to prophecy. There is no need for the gift of interpretation to be used, unless it has been preceded by an unknown tongue that needs to be interpreted. Interpretation is the ability given supernaturally by the Holy Spirit to present in a known language, the meaning of a message previously given out in an unknown language. The person who brings the interpretation may be the same person who gave the unknown tongue, or it may be another person. The scripture leaves that open for either possibility. The purpose of the interpretation of unknown tongues is the same as that of prophecy. It gets people's attention. The test of the use of these gifts is to ask if they edify the church. Tongues edify the speaker only, prophecy edifies the church. Prophecy is greater than tongues unless one interprets. The ultimate use for tongues and interpretation is for edification of God's people. If God gives the utterance in the unknown tongue, and to another the interpretation, He is promoting the interdependence of the church members. The speaker in tongues needs the interpreter and the interpreter

needs the speaker in tongues. Paul said a tongue is out of place in the church unless it is followed by an interpretation. If there is no one to interpret, the tongue should be quiet, or not spoken out loud. Grouping the three gifts together, there should not be more than two or three prophecies, tongues and interpretations, and others need to judge – not the speakers, but the prophecies. All believers can have the gift of prophecy. The speaker is always in complete control of themselves, and the Spirit of prophecy is subject to the prophet. Only one person at a time should speak while the others remain silent and wait their turn, for God is the Source of their prophesying, and He is not a God of confusion but of peace and order (1 Corinthians 14:2 to 33).

Interpretation of tongues is not translation. To translate is to express what was said in another language on a line-by-line basis. To interpret is to explain the meaning of what has been said in a specified way, that is to tell what is the will of God. When Jesus ascended, He bestowed gifts on people, and His gifts were varied (Ephesians 4:8, 11 & 12), but we need to see the distinct difference between the five ministry gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Ministry gifts are intended to perfect and equip God's people for good works so they are able to go out, preach the Gospel and reach the lost, bringing them into fellowship in the church. The nine gifts of the Holy Spirit then edify and encourage the church which is filled with these new converts. Whatever gifts the Lord has bestowed upon us, let us use our gifts for the glory of God.

Amen and God bless you.

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