

Series: "The Holy Spirit"
"He Gives Us Presents"

This is the last in a series of messages on the Holy Spirit. Today I would like us to look at the gifts of the Spirit, and also share some of my thoughts regarding what is called the "charismatic movement". Before we do this, however, let's look at one other ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit intercedes for us when we pray. Romans 8:26-27 says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

This Scripture says that the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*. We don't know how to pray as we ought. Anyone argue with that? We may not know what's best to pray for. We cannot see the future. We don't have a clear grasp of all the factors in a situation. So as we pray, we come face to face with our human limitations.

But we are also weak in another sense. Sometimes we just can't find the words to express what is so heavy on our mind or heart. So the Holy Spirit is there to help us with that! He intercedes "with sighs too deep for words" (NRSV), or as the New International Version has it, "with groans that words cannot express." The Bible doesn't say exactly what this means, but the idea seems to be that the Holy Spirit brings our deepest, sometimes inexpressible, longings before God the Father. Haven't you ever had times when you just couldn't find words to convey to God what you're feeling? Maybe you are just overwhelmed with grief, or fear, or praise, or thankfulness. I have had those times. And I might have prayed, "Spirit, make intercession." Or I've just kind of groaned: "Oh, Holy Spirit." Of course, this doesn't mean we do this all of the time...that we're too lazy to verbalize our prayers! But sometimes we can't find words, and it is good to know that the Spirit brings our deepest longings to the Father.

I want to finish today's message, and this series, by looking at ***the gifts of the Holy Spirit***. Suppose God said this to you, "I want to give you a present, or maybe a couple. These will help you know how to serve Me. If you use your gift it will bless others, and help you find your niche in the church, and give you a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment." What do you think? That sound good to you? *That's exactly what God has done in giving us gifts of the Holy Spirit!*

1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." If you and I have received Christ and trust Him as our Savior, we have at least one gift of the Spirit.

We see these gifts in operation in the church of the New Testament period. Hebrews 2:4 describes the early church in these words. "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by *gifts of the Holy Spirit* distributed according to his own will." The church of the New Testament period was alive and pulsating with the moving of the Spirit and His gifts!

The Greek word most often used for "gifts" of the Spirit is the word *charisma*, or the plural form

charismata. This comes from the root word *charis* or “grace”. These are “grace gifts,” gifts that flow out of God’s grace. The gifts of the Spirit are not something we get by just trying hard enough, not something we earn or deserve. They are like presents God gives us.

Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents. All of us are born with certain natural talents. Talents are given to everyone, Christian or not. The gifts of the Spirit are given only when we become a believer in Christ.

Why are they given? What’s their purpose? As it says in 1 Corinthians 12:7, they are given “for the common good”. They are given for the good of the church and the whole body of Christ. When we all in the church use our spiritual gifts, the whole church is strengthened and able to fulfill its ministry.

What are some of these gifts of the Spirit? Time today permits us only a quick overview of the gifts.

The list of gifts most often referred to is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: “To one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

The ***utterance of wisdom***. This is not just being a smart or wise person, but rather telling someone something wise to do that you would have no way of knowing other than Spirit reveals this wisdom.

The ***utterance of knowledge***. This gift involves expressing knowledge of something that the Spirit has revealed, something you would have no way of knowing except through the Spirit making this known. For instance, a pastor or leader might say in a healing service, “someone in the pews on this side is being healed of a tumor on their one lung”.

Faith. The spiritual gift of faith is not the faith in Jesus that everybody needs in order to be saved, but extraordinary faith that often results in unusual happenings.

Healing. The Greek of the New Testament here literally reads “gifts of healings.”

Working of miracles. This involves God working extraordinary deeds of power through someone with this gift.

Prophecy. Basically the word prophecy means to speak for God, telling what God is doing and what God wants us to do in a particular situation.

Discerning of spirits. This gift entails distinguishing what different kind of spirit may be at work or behind something that happens, whether that spirit is of God, or of man, or of Satan.

Tongues. This involves speaking a heavenly language.

Interpretation of tongues. A person with this gift will interpret a message given in tongues.

Most of these gifts are rather unusual, supernatural, aren't they? But there is another list of gifts in Romans 12. "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence, the compassionate, in cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6-8). In this passage, the word for gifts is *charismata*, the same word used in the gift list found in 1 Corinthians 12. Let's take a quick look at these gifts.

Prophecy. This was also listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Ministry, or service. Serving the Lord and people in very practical ways.

Teaching.

Exhortation, which means to encourage.

Giving. Some people have the spiritual gift of being able to give either large amounts or a large percent of their income.

Leadership.

Showing mercy or compassion.

Did you notice that some of these gifts are less spectacular than those listed in 1 Corinthians 12. However, they are just as important!

So far, there are 15 gifts in these lists. Are there other gifts listed in the New Testament? Bible students disagree on the number of gifts. I believe there are 3 additional gifts listed later on in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 27-31: the gifts of ***apostleship, helps and administration.***

I also would add 2 more in Ephesians 4:11-12: ***evangelism, and shepherding.***

Not all Christians agree on the number of gifts listed in the New Testament, or whether there are other spiritual gifts not listed in the Bible. We can debate this matter forever, but the important thing is to focus on those listed, to see which gift or gifts you have been given, and to put them to use! *I believe these gifts should be operating in the church today, including some of the more supernatural gifts like healing or miracles. But many churches simply ignore them.* Discovering and using our gift or gifts can bring joy and fulfillment to us, and greatly enrich and strengthen the Body of Christ, the church.

We may ask, "Do we receive a gift and it stays with us for life, or do the gifts come and go?"

The Bible doesn't say. But I believe both are the case. For instance, if one has the gift of teaching, it will most likely stay with that person for life. But there might be just certain situations where an utterance of knowledge is needed, or a miracle.

How can you and I discover what gift or gifts the Spirit has given us? Here are some ways. First, be informed about the gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:1 says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sister, I do not want you to be uninformed (ignorant)." I think we need to offer some more teaching about the gifts here in this church in the near future. "Spiritual gift inventories" are another way for us to get in touch with our gifts. These help us understand what gift or gifts we may have.

Second, really desire the gifts. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts." The Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you" (Romans 1:11). It must frustrate the Holy Spirit when He offers us a present for ministry, and we're not even interested in pursuing it.

Third, step out and attempt things for God. Romans 12:6 says, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let us use them.*" 1 Peter 4:10 tells us, "As each one has received a gift, *employ it* for one another." So, you may think that you might have the gift of teaching? Then teach! If people seem to be blessed by your teaching, and come closer to God through your teaching, you probably do possess that gift. On the other hand, if people in your group fall asleep during the session, or stay away when they know you're on to teach, you probably don't have gift!

I want to say some things about what is called the ***charismatic movement***. Up until perhaps the 1960's and 1970's, if you wanted to go where some of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 were operating - gifts like tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healings, prophecy - you would most likely have to go to a Pentecostal church (Assemblies of God). But then a movement of the Spirit came along where people in mainline denominations, and Roman Catholic churches, were testifying to a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit, that included the use of these spiritual gifts. One of the hallmarks of this movement is that people claim to be "baptized in the Spirit" - and many say the evidence of this is that when it happens you speak in tongues. This move of the Spirit has become known as the "charismatic movement", from the word for gift, charisma (pl. charismata).

My introduction to the charismatic movement came when I was in college, and the pastor of my home church had this experience, and we began to have prayer and praise services in the church. Over the years I have developed a certain affection towards the charismatic movement. I've been to any number of prayer meetings and praise services where the gifts of the Spirit were operating. I have sought the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and have had decisive encounters with the Spirit that have deepened my faith, although I have never, to my knowledge, spoken in tongues.

I would like to just share some personal reflections here that I hope will be fair.

Admittedly, there are some things that trouble me about the charismatic movement. For one thing, I disagree with some of the theology and Biblical interpretation I have seen. I differ on what it means to be “baptized in the Spirit”, on the place of tongues, and even what the term “charismatic” means. For instance, I was once asked, “Are you charismatic?” I know what the person asking me was getting at! This person wanted to know if I had the experience of speaking in tongues? But I believe *everyone born again* is charismatic – because to *each* believer is given a charisma, or gift of the Spirit!

I have also found tendency for some in the movement to look down on those who haven’t had an experience like them, that unless we have their experience, we’re not filled with the Spirit. I even had a couple of people suggest that unless you have had an experience like theirs where you spoke in tongues, you *don’t even have the Spirit!* I have seen a few people get this experience, then look down on others in the church as “unspiritual”. There are many dynamic Christians, filled with the Spirit, who haven’t spoken in tongues

In addition, there is a tendency within the charismatic movement to focus on the 9 gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and ignore the other gifts listed elsewhere that may be less spectacular – gifts such as shepherding, serving, showing mercy.

So, yes, there are things we ought to be cautious about, but I believe ***the work of the Spirit we see in the charismatic movement is of God and badly needed in the church today!*** For one thing, among charismatics, there is much more of a sense of the nearness and reality of the Spirit. I have been in prayer meetings with 10, 15 people, and in worship services with 200-300 people, where someone speaks a message in tongues, or prophecies, and there is this sense that God Himself is right there, speaking directly to His people!

And then, I value the joy and spontaneity often found among charismatic Christians. Let’s face it: a lot of our church services are joyless, dull, predictable. The sense of uninhibited praise (such as lifting one’s hands), the energy and enthusiasm in worship, offer a welcome change from the often drab and spiritless worship found in many congregations.

Thirdly, there is often within the charismatic movement, a sense of expectancy – that God will show up and show off! Charismatics are more likely to expect God to do something when we gather to pray and praise: that there will be miracles, healings, direct messages from God through tongues and prophecy. This, in contrast to one study indicating that a high percent of regular churchgoers surveyed don’t expect to meet God when they come to worship. There is no reason why these supernatural manifestations of the Spirit can’t happen here!

And then, for many involved in the charismatic movement, it has been a liberating encounter with God. When is the last time you had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit that thrilled your soul and propelled you to a higher plane of Christian living? Many, catching the charismatic wave of the Spirit, have turned from being marginal, lukewarm “Christians”, to enthusiastic,

joyful, fruitful disciples of Jesus!

Friends, the Holy Spirit wants to fill you...and me. He wants to pour into you and me a new joy in believing, a new boldness to declare yourself a follower of Jesus, a new love for God and compassion for people.

He wants to do that! Will we let Him?

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