

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts

Lesson #16

The Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts is an essential doctrine for the church. In recent years much has been written on the subject and much of it does not have biblical support. Many, wanting to see the miracles of the early church return today, have twisted the Scriptures in order to promote false concepts about the proper role of spiritual gifts in the church. Others have pressured believers to seek out, define, and use their spiritual gifts by using man-made methods. In this lesson we will get a general overview of spiritual gifts. We will not engage in the much-debated issue of tongues and sign gifts, but save those issues for other lessons.

I. DEFINITION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. Billy Graham in *The Holy Spirit*: “The Bible teaches that every redeemed person is given at least one gift of the Holy Spirit: “Now there are varieties of gifts, . . . But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (I **Cor. 12:4, 7**). God holds us responsible for the way we use our gifts.”¹
- B. Abraham Kuyper in *The Work of the Holy Spirit*: “The charisma or spiritual gifts are the divinely ordained means and powers whereby the King enables His Church to perform its task on the earth.”²
- C. D. Martin Lloyd Jones in *God the Holy Spirit*: “We all have natural gifts, but the spiritual gifts, which any one of us may possess, is something separate from and entirely different from this. It is a gift that is given directly to us by the Holy Spirit. Let us go further and say that it does not even mean the heightening of a natural gift. Some people have fallen into that error. They have thought that what a spiritual gift really means is that a person’s natural gift is taken hold of by the Holy Spirit and heightened or made more vivid so that it therefore becomes a spiritual gift. But that is not what the Scripture would have us believe. A spiritual gift is something new, something different.”³
- D. *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: “Spiritual gifts [are] special gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon Christians for the purpose of building up the church.”⁴

¹Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 166.

²Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, pg. 196.

³D. Martin Lloyd Jones, *God the Holy Spirit*, pg. 265.

⁴Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Rev. Ed. of. (Nashville: T. Nelson,

- E. *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary*: "Five gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable Christians to minister to fellow Christians. These are: working of miracles, gifts of healing, gifts of helps, gifts of government, and gifts of faith. There are 14 gifts concerning the Word of God: apostleship, prophecy, discernment of spirits, teaching, exhortation, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, tongues, interpretation of tongues, evangelism, service, contributing to the needs of the church, acts of mercy, and giving aid."⁵

- F. Charles Ryrie in *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*: "A spiritual gift is a God-given ability for service. If we keep in mind that a gift is primarily an ability, it will keep us from much of the confusion which exists in people's minds concerning gifts."⁶

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. *New Bible Dictionary*: "Various classifications of the gifts have been attempted, but they fall most simply into two main categories—those which qualify their possessors for the ministry of the word and those which equip them for practical service."⁷

- B. Charles Ryrie in *The Holy Spirit*: "The "peril of the pendulum" operates in teachings concerning spiritual gifts. On one extreme of the pendulum is the idea that spiritual gifts were given to the early church only and are irrelevant to the church today. According to this view the important concern for today is spiritual maturity, not gifts. . . . At the opposite swing of the pendulum is the teaching that you must know your spiritual gift(s) before you can do anything for the Lord."⁸

- C. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: "The apostle Paul indicated that these gifts are equally valid but not equally valuable. Their value is determined by their worth to the church. In dealing with this matter, he used the analogy of the human body. All members of the body have functions, Paul declared, but some are more important than others. The service of each Christian should be in proportion to the gifts that person possesses (1 Corinthians 12–14)."⁹

- D. Charles Ryrie in *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*: "We can develop our gifts by benefitting from the ministry of others (see **Ro 1:11** where Paul is not saying that he could bestow gifts but that he could through his ministry impart the benefit of his spiritual gifts to others). This should be a never ending cycle—gifted people

⁵George Thomas Kurian, *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary: The Authoritative Resource on the Christian World* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Pubs., 2001).

⁶Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

⁷*New Bible Dictionary*, under "Spiritual Gifts", Logos Bible Software.

⁸Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 127-128.

⁹Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Rev. Ed. of. (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1995).

ministering to others who are thereby built up and who in turn minister to others who are then built up to minister to others, etc. This is the way the body of Christ grows quantitatively and qualitatively.”¹⁰

III. SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. **Rom. 12:3-8** For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

B. **I Cor. 12:4-31** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or

¹⁰Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, c1972).

again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

31 But earnestly desire¹¹ the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way. [*Vs. 31 might be better translated, "But you earnestly desire the greater gifts! But I will show you a more excellent way." This interpretation fits the context better of their desire to get great gifts, when they didn't understand that it was the work of the Holy Spirit, not man.*]

- C. **Eph. 4:4-13** There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

¹¹This phrase "earnestly desire" (NASB) can also be translated, "you earnestly desire." Many take it as Paul's encouragement for the Corinthians and all believers to seek greater gifts. However, Paul makes it clear in the preceding context that we have nothing to do with the gift/s we receive for they are given by the Holy Spirit. The better way to understand the text is that Paul is condemning or chastising the Corinthians for desiring greater gifts instead of being content with the gifts the Holy Spirit had given them. This also fits well with the following context where Paul desires to show the Corinthians a better way than wanting great gifts and that is to minister out of love with whatever gift the Holy Spirit has given.

- D. **Heb. 2:3-4** how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.
- E. **I Pet. 4:10-11** As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Primary Spiritual Gifts and Texts Compared			
Romans 12:6-8	I Corinthians 12:8-10	Ephesians 4:11 ¹²	I Pet. 4:10-11
Prophecy	Word of wisdom	Prophets	Speaking
Service	Word of knowledge	Apostles	Serving
Teaching	Faith	Evangelists	
Exhortation	Healing	Pastors ¹³	
Giving	Miracles	Teachers	
Leadership	Prophecy		
Mercy	Distinguishing of spirits		
	Tongues		
	Interpretation of tongues		

Basic Definitions and Texts of Spiritual Gifts and Offices			
Teaching - to explain and communicate biblical doctrine to others through question and answer so they can understand how to apply the truth.	Rom. 12:7 I Cor. 12:28 Eph. 4:11	Faith - an extra degree of faith in God which is an example and encouragement to the body.	I Cor. 12:8-10

¹²Ephesians 4:11 is a list of offices given to the church, not spiritual gifts. However, the offices are gifts, they do require certain spiritual gifts to operate, and they are for the benefit or edification of the church. Hence, many include them with spiritual gifts because of their close association with the gifts of the Spirit.

¹³Many believe that the phrase "pastors and teachers" is not a gift, but the single office of "pastor/teacher."

Basic Definitions and Texts of Spiritual Gifts and Offices			
Ministering, service, or helps - an extra degree or refined kind of giftedness to serve others in the body of Christ.	Rom. 12:7 I Cor. 12:28	Apostleship ¹⁴ - one who accompanied Jesus during His ministry, performed signs of an apostle, and who was sent with authority from Christ to proclaim the gospel.	I Cor. 12:12, 28 Eph. 4:11
Administration or leadership - the exceptional ability to lead and/or administrate the affairs of the church.	Rom. 12:8 I Cor. 12:28	Prophecy - one who receives direct revelation from God and communicates that message in a perfect inspired way.	Rom. 12:6 I Cor. 12:10, 28; 14:1-40
Evangelism - an extra degree and passion to evangelize the lost.	Eph. 4:11	Miracles - authority from God to cast out demons, heal all manner of disease and sickness, in order to authenticate the gospel message to unbelievers.	I Cor. 12:28
Pastor - the ability to care for, feed, and protect the church from false doctrine and false teachers.	Eph. 4:11	Healing - similar to the gift of miracles but used exclusively to heal physical and spiritual maladies.	I Cor. 12:9, 28, 30
Exhortation - similar to teaching and preaching. It is the gift of appealing to others to take action on Biblical truth, usually in private.	Rom. 12:8	Tongues - the ability of men to speak in a known language to unbelievers for the purpose of communicating the gospel to them.	I Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 14:1-40
Giving - an extra degree or desire to support and give to others in the church from one's resources.	Rom. 12:8	Interpreting Tongues - the supernatural ability to understand and interpret languages unknown to oneself for the purpose of communicating Biblical truth.	I Cor. 12:10; 14:26-28
Mercy - an extra ability to help, encourage and support those who are weak and hurting.	Rom. 12:8	Distinguishing spirits - the enhanced ability to distinguish doctrinal truth from error. Most likely a sign gift that worked with several others to make sure those who claimed to prophesy were true.	I Cor. 12:10
Word of Wisdom - the gift of being able to understand how the Word of God should be applied to a certain situation.	I Cor. 12:8	Word of Knowledge - possibly a gift that works in tandem with those who study to preach and teach, the extra ability to discover keen insights from the study of God's Word.	I Cor. 12:8

¹⁴Many believe that the gifts and/or offices of apostleship, prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and distinguishing spirits were temporary gifts of the apostolic era and have ceased permanently.

IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

- A. Error – We need to ask and/or pray to receive our spiritual gifts.
- B. Error – Every Christian should speak in tongues.
- C. Error – We need to do a spiritual gifts inventory to discover our spiritual gifts.
- D. Error – We only have one spiritual gift and should only serve in one area.
- E. Error – God is no longer doing miracles because the sign gifts are no longer given to believers.
- F. Error – It doesn't matter how you use your spiritual gift as long as you use it.
- G. Error – God doesn't give any spiritual gifts today.

V. **APPLICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

- A. You should not be envious of others' gifts, since they are given by the Holy Spirit, but instead be content with the gift/s God has chosen to give you.
- B. Spiritual gifts are for the edification of the church, not self.
- C. You are responsible to use your gift/s for the common good of the church.
- D. You can usually discover what your gift is in the process of ministering to others. Here are some practical guidelines for discovering your Spiritual gift/s.
 - 1. Pray and ask God to help you discover your spiritual gift.
 - 2. Seek to serve in whatever ministry you desire the most. Make sure you get adequate training.
 - 3. Serve for a time in that ministry and then evaluate how you like it and what fruit it is bearing.
 - 4. If you like the ministry and others are blessed, you most likely found your spiritual gift or at least a ministry that helps you employ it.
 - 5. Once you have found your spiritual gift seek to excel still more.

Lord, when thou didst ascend on high,
Ten thousand angels filled the sky;
Those heav'nly guards around thee wait,
Like chariots that attend thy state.

Not Sinai's mountain could appear
More glorious when the Lord was there;
While he pronounced his dreadful law,
And struck the chosen tribes with awe.

How bright the triumph none can tell,
When the rebellious powers of hell,
That thousand souls had captive made,
Were all in chains like captives led.

Raised by his Father to the throne,
He sent the promised Spirit down
With gifts and grace for rebel men,
That God might dwell on earth again.¹⁵

¹⁵ Watts, Isaac. *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1998.