

THE
NINE GIFTS
OF
THE SPIRIT

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Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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THE NINE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

THE PERSONAL GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit, they are immersed in and clothed with the power of God - the power from on high (Luke 24:49). This power is then available, at a potential level, to each Christian who is Spirit-baptized. The purpose of this is to make us effective soldiers of the Cross. The gifts of the Spirit are then the means by which God's power is able to flow, as, of course, the Spirit sees fit (1 Corinthians 12:11).

With this power we are better equipped (in a potential sense) to fulfill the ministry of reconciliation which is given to every Christian. The gifts of the Spirit are given to edify and help perfect the Body of Christ on earth, and to assist in winning the lost to salvation, thus helping build the Kingdom of God.

Paul outlines the gifts and their operation in First Corinthians:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Although the word "gifts" in verse one is not mentioned in the original Greek translation, verses 4, 9 and 28-31 indicate that the subject Paul is addressing here is that of "spiritual gifts." Paul goes on to explain:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4 Now there are diversities of Gifts (different types of Gifts), but the same Spirit (all of this means the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself). (E.S.B.)

1 CORINTHIANS 12:5 And there are differences of Administrations (different Services, Ministries, Offices), but the same Lord. (Christ is the One Who assigns the different Ministries, with the Holy Spirit then carrying out the function . .) (E.S.B.)

1 CORINTHIANS 12:6 And there are diversities of Operations (different ways the Gifts work), but it is the

same God Who works all in all (has reference to the fact it is God the Father Who energizes all things and all ways). (E.S.B.)

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit (pertains to that which the Gifts make manifest or reveal) is given to every man to profit withal. (If the Gifts are allowed to function properly, which they definitely will if the Holy Spirit has His Way, all will profit.) (E.S.B.)

1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit a word of wisdom; to another a word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

1 CORINTHIANS 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit;

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discernings of spirits; to another divers (different) kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:11 But all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit (refers to the fact that all the abilities and powers of the Gifts are produced and operated by the energy of the Spirit : E.S.B.), dividing to every man severally as He will.

These are the personal gifts God has given, potentially, to every Christian who has received the Spirit Baptism. Indeed each person who is Spirit-baptized has the potential to operate in all of these gifts as the Spirit wills. They can be divided into three groups:

1. The Revelation Gifts: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and discernings of spirits are known as the revelation gifts, given to assist people in ministering effectively to others.

2. The Vocal Gifts: different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy are the vocal gifts, given to provide direction to the Church on both corporate and personal levels.

3. The Power Gifts: the gifts of healings, the working of miracles and the gift of faith are known as the power gifts, and are used as their titles indicate. The word translated “power” in the Greek is “dunamis.” From “dunamis” we derive our words “dynamite,” an explosive force, and “dynamo,” a power generator. Because the Holy Spirit, the source of power, is within, “dunamis” comes from within.

In a general sense, these gifts are all means by which God’s power is released so that His will may be accomplished. When we operate in any of the gifts of the Spirit, we operate in God’s power.

We must always remember, however, that the Holy Spirit is in control of the gifts of the Spirit, and they will only operate when He wills them to, through open vessels. We as Spirit-baptized Believers have access to all these gifts, and indeed we are told to “*desire (the) spiritual gifts*” (1 Corinthians 14:1). But it is according to the will of the Spirit when they operate and how they operate.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:11 But all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing (distributing) to every man severally (individually) as He will (at the Holy Spirit’s discretion).

Note: We believe that people not baptized in the Holy Spirit can receive direction from the Lord, either for themselves or others. Usually, however, when such individuals are baptized in the Holy Spirit, they experience a whole new world of spiritual perception where such things as direction and healing are much more readily obtained. As a result, they often find that they can minister to others more effectively, as well as gaining a much more intimate knowledge of God’s will for their own lives on a day to day basis.

HOW DO THE PERSONAL GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT OPERATE ?

Through the personal gifts of 1 Corinthians Ch.12, we can obtain the leading needed to pray effectively in different situations, according to God's will.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4 Now there are diversities (various kinds) of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:5 And there are differences of administrations (varieties of ministries), but the same Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:6 And there are diversities of operations (workings), but it is the same God Who works all in all.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

“diversities of operations”

“Diversities of operations” means that the gifts can operate through people in different ways. Jesus operated in the “*gifts of healings,*” for example, in various ways:

(a) He healed through the spoken word of faith:

MATTHEW 8:8 The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof (probably meaning because He was a Gentile): but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”

MATTHEW 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” (the intelligence of this Centurion was remarkable; he argued that the soldiers had to obey him because in his person resided

the authority of the Emperor; and, similarly, disease obeyed Jesus because in Him was the Authority of God). (E.S.B.)

MATTHEW 8:10 *When Jesus heard it, He marvelled (was astonished), and said to them who followed, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found (anyone in Israel with) so great faith, no, not in Israel (the faith of this Gentile is contrasted with the unbelief of the Jews : Mark 6:6).*

MATTHEW 8:11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west (Gentile Believers), and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

MATTHEW 8:12 *But the children of the Kingdom (Jews, those who were heirs of the promises) shall be cast out into outer darkness (hell): there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Hell would be their destiny because they rejected Christ, the promised Messiah.)*

MATTHEW 8:13 *And Jesus said unto the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you.” And his servant was healed in the selfsame (at that very) hour.*

(b) He healed through the laying on of hands:

MATTHEW 9:27 *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, “Thou son of David (the title belonging to the Messiah), have mercy on us.”*

MATTHEW 9:28 *And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said unto him, “Yes, Lord.” (Faith, the currency of heaven, was all that was required.)*

MATTHEW 9:29 *Then touched He their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it unto you.”*

MATTHEW 9:30 *And their eyes were opened (instantly); and Jesus straitly charged (sternly warned) them, saying, “See that no man know it (tell no one). ”*

(c) The gifts of healings were ministered through Him via another’s faith and direct contact:

MARK 5:25 *And a certain woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years,*

MARK 5:26 *And had suffered many things of many physicians (the means employed to heal her had caused her great pain), and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse (despite all this she was worse, not better),*

MARK 5:27 *When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press (crowd) behind, and touched His garment.*

MARK 5:28 *For she said (kept saying to herself), “If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole (be healed - this was her level of faith).”*

MARK 5:29 *And straightway (immediately) the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague (knew she was healed).*

MARK 5:30 *And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue (healing power) had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press (crowd), and said, “Who touched My clothes?”*

MARK 5:31 *And His Disciples (incredulously) said unto Him, “You see the multitude thronging (around) You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ”*

MARK 5:32 *And He looked round about to see her who had done this thing.*

MARK 5:33 *But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.*

MARK 5:34 *And He said unto her, “Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace, and be whole of your plague (healed of your affliction).”*

(d) Jesus healed through making clay, placing it on a man’s eyes and telling him to wash:

JOHN 9:1 *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth.*

JOHN 9:6 *When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,*

JOHN 9:7 *And said unto him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam,” (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came (back) seeing.*

(e) Jesus healed by placing spit on a man’s eyes and laying hands on him.

MARK 8:22 *And He comes to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man unto Him, and besought (begged) Him to touch him.*

MARK 8:23 *And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit (spat) on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought (anything).*

MARK 8:24 *And he looked up, and said, “I see men as trees, walking.”*

MARK 8:25 *After that He put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored (healed), and saw every man clearly.*

MARK 8:26 *And He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."*

We can thus see from scripture that there was no patterned formula by which the gifts of healings operated in Jesus' life and ministry. Rather He was led by the Holy Spirit in each particular case.

The word of knowledge can also operate in Christians' lives in different ways. For example, people may receive a word from the Lord which is written in front of them and they are able to see with their spiritual eyes. Alternatively, a word of knowledge can be given in the form of a voice from within or can come simply as an inner knowing. There are thus different ways in which this gift operates, i.e. "*diversities of operations.*" Nevertheless it is still the same gift.

THE GIFT OF THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 *For to one is given by the Spirit . . . a word of knowledge . . .*

"*A word of knowledge*" is particular information given by the Spirit, usually to help us deal with situations about which the Bible is unable to give clear, precise direction. For example, how can a person know what is in the mind or heart of another unless the Spirit of God reveals it? A person cannot know, for it is only the Spirit of God Who knows everything about each of us and is able to reveal such knowledge. A word of knowledge may thus be given to us when knowledge about a particular situation (or person) is hidden and we need to deal with that situation by the power of God. Also, when God gives a person a word of knowledge, He only gives partial knowledge about a particular situation - for the Spirit of God will generally only reveal that which is needed for that situation to be dealt with effectively.

The word of knowledge can relate to knowledge concerning the past, the present or the future. Sometimes the gifts can overlap and enmesh to the extent that it may be difficult to distinguish, for example, whether something given is prophecy or a word of knowledge concerning the future.

THE GIFT OF THE WORD OF WISDOM

*1 CORINTHIANS 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit
a word of wisdom . . .*

Quite often, “*a word of wisdom*” will be given with a word of knowledge so we can know exactly what to do with the knowledge that has been revealed. The word of wisdom is needed because knowledge alone will be of little benefit if it is not applied effectively, and if we use the knowledge we have gained unwisely, the situation about which we have gained the knowledge could become worse.

The word of wisdom generally operates in the same way as the word of knowledge. It can come as a strong inner knowing or can be written up before people’s spiritual eyes, etc.

A word of knowledge will reveal the cause or source of a problem and a word of wisdom will show how to deal with that problem successfully using the knowledge which has been given. Combined together, these gifts will give the assurance required to approach that situation or difficulty with confidence. For example, ministers in the normal course of their life or while preaching at Christian conferences, for instance, have been known to receive a word of knowledge that a certain person is committing adultery. This is a word of knowledge. Then a word of wisdom is needed to know what to do with this information, e.g. to approach the person concerned on a private basis, to make a general public announcement or to retain the knowledge for future reference. Only God knows the heart and mind of the person concerned and the best way in which to bring that person to repentance. This can happen not only to ministers but to normal Christians as well. Thus we can see that knowledge without the necessary wisdom can be dangerous, and this concerns the word of knowledge in most situations. To deal with the complexities of human nature, not only knowledge is needed;

wisdom in how to apply the knowledge is essential. Again this wisdom can relate to current situations, or future events.

The gifts can reveal God's will to us in particular situations which the Word does not specifically address. Then knowing God's perfect will regarding a particular issue can allow the faith within us to rise up. This is a great advantage. We can then pray confidently with proper focus, and this allows God's power to flow (1 John 5:14-15). Remember too that the Lord will never ask us to pray for something or someone if it is beyond our level of faith. So we can be sure that if God has told us to do something, we are capable of doing it - and He will give us that which is needed as we remain open to Him.

THE GIFT OF FAITH

1 CORINTHIANS 12:9 To another (the gift of special) faith by the same Spirit . . .

The gift of faith can operate when we reach the end of our normal God-given faith and a greater faith is required to bring the will of God to pass.

When God tells us to believe for something and our normal faith is not sufficient, then the gift of faith can be given. God uses the person concerned as a vessel, according to the will of the Spirit. God then gives this special measure of faith, beyond the Saint's normal level of faith.

This gift usually affects something or someone miraculously and powerfully. The gift of faith, however, generally operates only in special circumstances, e.g. if God wants to raise someone from the dead, or He wants something miraculous done and the person praying can believe for the gift of faith to operate.

Note: If you are believing God for something in your life, base your faith on the Word and do not depend on the gift of faith for the power of God to be manifested. Even though it is possible for God to answer prayer in this way, it is rare. This is because God desires us to live by faith in His Word - for as the scriptures say, "*the just shall live by faith*" :

HEBREWS 10:38 But the just shall live by faith [that is, My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him. [Habukkuk 2:3-4]. (Amp.)

THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS

Background Reading: Acts 3:1-10

1 CORINTHIANS 12:9 . . . to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit

The “*gifts of healings*” are used as a means of bringing God’s healing power to people who need healing but are unable to receive directly from God themselves (through having faith in His Word) or through the simple Word-based prayer of others. The gifts of healings have nothing to do with medical science or academic training - they are a supernatural manifestation of God’s power.

The term “to heal” means “to cure,” “to repair,” “to restore,” “to make whole.” It means to bring soundness, completeness, restoration and wholeness to a person’s body.

Healing can take on a touch of the miraculous in the sense that a person can be completely defeated by a disease, concerning which medical science has no answers. To be healed in this situation defies natural thinking and demonstrates the wonder of God’s power.

Divine healing can also encompass the speeding up of the body’s natural healing processes so that instead of it taking six weeks to be healed of a sickness, for example, it may only take two weeks, two days or even less. Divine healing can also take place instantaneously, as soon as one is prayed for.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which we can be healed. Normally Christians receive healing by believing on God’s Word, whether they are prayed for by others or simply apply the Word to their own lives, by faith. And it is faith in these circumstances which releases God’s power so that they are healed, e.g. James 5:14-15.

When the gifts of healings operate, however, a special endowment of power is given to one person to minister to another, and it is this special Anointing of God which does the work. In other words, God uses one person as a channel to minister His healing power, through the gifts, to another. This can occur, of course, outside public meetings.

Sometimes when the gifts of healings are operating, people may be healed without any direct contact with the person whom God is using as a channel to minister His power. Once again, however, it is this special endowment of power to heal which is obviously present and which is the sign of the “*gifts of healings*” being manifested.

THE GIFT OF THE WORKING OF MIRACLES

Background Reading: Acts 19:8-11; 20:7-12

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10 To another the working of miracles . . .

The Biblical word “miracle” is defined as “a powerful deed” and the phrase “*the working of miracles*” literally means “the operation of (explosive) powers.”

A miracle is a supernatural interruption of the normal course of nature and is brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit. As such it is extremely obvious, and will always astonish, and give glory to the God of all power.

The gift of “*the working of miracles*” operates in a similar way to the gifts of healings, and can work in conjunction with healing. However although the two are closely related, both being manifestations of God’s supernatural power, and both usually being administered through the laying on of hands, the working of miracles differs from the gifts of healings.

“***The working of miracles,***” in regard to the human body, is creative in nature. It is manifested in situations such as the restoration of lost limbs, fingers and toes; the filling of tooth cavities; the creation of eardrums or eyes in people who were born without them, etc. It encompasses the bringing into existence of parts of the body which did not previously exist, are no longer present or are completely irreparable.

The working of miracles, in the broader sense, was demonstrated throughout Jesus' earthly ministry when He changed the water into wine (John 2:1-11), fed the multitudes (Matthew 14:15-21, 15:32-38), walked on the water (Matthew 14:22-27) and raised the dead (John Ch. 11, Luke 7:11-17, 8:49-56).

We must remember when thinking about this subject that the supernatural manifestation of God's power will not cause people to believe unto salvation. We know this because the Word states that faith comes by hearing the Word of God itself - the message of truth. However, God uses miracles to create interest or to confirm the words being preached or taught (Acts 8:5-6; Mark 16:20), and to draw people's attention, through this remarkable means, to Himself. In turn, seeing such wonderful demonstrations of God's love and power, people may open their hearts to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and accept Him as Lord and Saviour.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10 . . . to another prophecy . . .

The Greek word which is translated "to prophesy" means "to speak for another." Therefore when we prophesy, we are speaking on behalf of God. Prophecy is a supernatural utterance or message given in a known language, to a Believer, by the Holy Spirit. The Believer normally then speaks out this message to the church as a body, or, on occasions, to individual members of the church. Thus God uses this gift to reveal His direction to people in the Body of Christ on both corporate and personal levels, prophecy being normally for the purpose of "*edification and exhortation and comfort*" (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The person operating in this gift may begin with an impression or just a few words. Then as the person speaks these words out in faith, more words are revealed until the complete message is delivered. As we have stated, the person prophesying is speaking on God's behalf. It is important to note, however, that the person who operates in the gift of prophecy is not necessarily a prophet. This is because, while the office of the prophet is a position within the Five Fold Ministry, the gift of prophecy is available to every Christian who is Spirit-baptized.

Nevertheless, we are told in scripture that we (all Spirit-filled Believers) should desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1), even coveting the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:39). So we should be confident that it is God's will for all of us to prophesy from time to time, as the Spirit leads us to do so (1 Corinthians 14:3).

Note: On occasions, people may think they are speaking words of prophecy when really they are only speaking from the flesh. Those who are listening should be able to discern whether a prophetic utterance is from God or not through an inner witness - that is, if they have had "*their senses exercised to discern both (between) good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:14), or are in tune with the Spirit's frequency. This means they are allowing the Spirit to give them a witness concerning the validity or integrity of the words spoken in the Name of the Lord.

THE GIFT OF DISCERNINGS OF SPIRITS

Background Reading: Acts 16:16-18

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10 . . . to another discernings of spirits . . .

The gift of "discernings of spirits" gives insight into the spirit world, and deals with both good and evil spirits, e.g. angels, evil angels and demons. It is not a spiritual gift aimed at uncovering human failings, nor does it give natural knowledge of people's psychology. It is concerned with supernatural insight into the spiritual realm. In other words, it involves either seeing into the spirit realm or perceiving an aspect of it, as of course the Spirit wills.

There are four types of spirits we have to deal with - Divine and angelic, Satanic and human. The gift of "*discernings of spirits,*" or as it is otherwise known, "discernment of spirits," can be used in the discerning of cherubim, seraphim, archangels or the host of angels. People may even be able to see the Lord, on some sort of spiritual level, through this gift. It can be used in the discerning of Satan and his legions - evil angels and demons. It can also be used in the discerning of the human spirit - the human heart - the intent, be it good or evil, of the human heart. It can also reveal the power, evil or good, that may be behind any supernatural manifestation. Again, it is important to know that this is not the person discerning these

things with their own faculties, but rather, it is the Holy Spirit revealing these things to that person.

When a Christian speaks out a message of prophecy in a church meeting, for instance, the prophecy can be:

1. Of the Holy Spirit.
2. Of the flesh.
3. Of the devil.
4. A mixture of 1, 2 and 3.

The gift of discernment of spirits can be used in this regard by the Spirit of God to give discernment to a person so that they are able to understand the source of the prophetic message and to distinguish any differing elements which may make up the whole of it.

This gift enables Christians to detect whether there are evil spirits operating in or around people or situations, and the particular nature of these evil spirits. For example, the Lord may show us that an evil spirit is influencing a particular person and blocking them from receiving from Him. He may reveal that this is a spirit of confusion or unbelief. Or the Lord may reveal that a spirit of pride is influencing or working through a particular individual. In this way, the Lord is able to reveal a problem that exists in that person's life. We would also then need a word of wisdom to know how to deal with this knowledge. Once an evil spirit has been revealed through the discernment of spirits, we should always ask the Lord, "Should I bind and loose this evil spirit, just bind it or do nothing?" (Matthew 12:43-45). Then if we, as Spirit-baptized Believers, have our spiritual ears open, the Lord will give us direction. This is the word of wisdom in operation, showing us what to do with that which the Lord has revealed through the gift of discernment of spirits.

Note: We should not allow this area to occupy our attention to a large degree, for we should always seek to be "Word conscious" rather than "devil conscious." People who become over-zealous in the area of demonology sometimes become unbalanced in their approach to their faith and can thus bring reproach upon the Gospel of Christ. Such over-focused people can see demons, as it were, under every rock. While this may be the case, our focus should always remain on, and our faith should always remain in, the Word of God and the power of God (and our relationship with Him through

the finished work of Christ on the Cross), rather than on what the devil is doing. In any case, his deceptive work can always be brought to naught in our lives by God's direction and power - if we are truly surrendered, and have faith and proper focus.

If we focus on the darkness in attempting to rid ourselves or others of it, we will not be focusing on the Light - God's power and presence. As a result, we can tend to lose perspective and enter into a flesh-based fight against the enemy. This we won't win, but it will keep us preoccupied so that what the Lord wants may be neglected and abandoned. The only way to fight darkness is to keep our full focus on the Lord Who alone can release and deliver the captives. If we search for demons, we will find more than we bargain for, and in the hunt, become strangely unproductive. So let us keep our eyes focused on the Light, the Cross of Calvary, and the goodness and power of our God. Let us remember - the battle is not ours but God's (2 Chron.20:15), and He will give the wisdom, power and leading that are necessary.

PUBLIC TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10 . . . to another divers (different) kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues

“Divers kinds of tongues” refers to the gift of public tongues and not our own personal tongues. It, unlike personal tongues, cannot be operated at will. It is the Spirit Who decides when He will give someone a message in tongues to be declared to the local body of Believers, etc., on His behalf. The gift of public tongues is used in conjunction with the gift of interpretation of tongues, for obvious reasons.

“Divers kinds of tongues” are utterances given by the Holy Spirit in languages not learned or understood by the speaker. Tongues are real languages of both men and angels (1 Corinthians 13:1) and can be recognized by listeners native to a particular language without interpretation (Acts Ch.2).

“The interpretation of tongues” is the showing forth of the meaning of an utterance given in public tongues. Interpretation of tongues comes about through a person speaking out that which the

Lord has given them via thoughts, impressions, a vision or an audible voice. It is manifested in response to a message in tongues.

The interpretation of the message given in tongues can be a paraphrase rather than a word-for-word translation. Thus the interpretation can be longer or shorter than the message in tongues because it may be conveying the essence or the central idea of the original message rather than being a direction translation.

Different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, combined, constitute a form of prophecy which the Lord may choose to use instead of normal prophecy. The main purpose of these gifts is to give direction and to edify Believers in corporate meetings. They can also be a sign to both Believers and unbelievers.

THE GIFTS - FURTHER POINTS TO NOTE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:11 But all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit (all these gifts are the work of the Spirit), dividing to every man severally (distributing to each individual) as He will (as the Spirit wills).

These are the nine gifts (graces) of the Spirit which every Christian who is baptized in the Holy Spirit has access to, and can operate in, by faith, as the Spirit wills. It is through these gifts that Christians have potential access to the power of heaven.

As we have seen, the gifts of the Holy Spirit usually work together to bring about God's will in any given situation. All the gifts are equally important and are necessary for us to be equipped to help other people and ourselves in time of need. They constitute a vital part of the equipment required for effective Christian service, and hence the doing of God's will.

It is important to note, however, that the ability to operate in the gifts of the Spirit alone is not an accurate gauge of the level of a person's spiritual maturity. Other factors must always be taken into account including lifestyle, speech, conduct, works of faith and love, etc. In this area, many continue to be led astray, believing that they or others are mature and spiritual, simply because they have been able to operate in the gifts. We are told, however, "*by their fruits you shall know them*" (Matthew 7:20), not by their gifts.

Also, the fact that we are operating in a certain gift does not make us superior to anyone else. We are not credited by God

according to our ability to operate in the gifts He has given us! Rather we are rewarded for our works of faith and love (1 Corinthians Ch.13).

However we should always desire the gifts of the Spirit, as God's Word instructs (1 Corinthians 14:1), for by the operation of the gifts, God's supernatural power can be manifested to heal, deliver and give direction. This then blesses God's people and bears witness to His power among the heathen, as people are miraculously healed and delivered. Let us therefore be encouraged to pray and believe for signs and wonders to be evidenced in our churches today!

Let us also remember that we always need to check everything we do or hear or experience by the Word of God - for this is our ultimate authority. The operation of the gifts can be affected by personal bias, and many other factors. For this reason, very often the revelation gifts can be tainted by the flesh or by input from the enemy. A thorough grounding in the Word of God will function as a filter for the revelation gifts so that this problem is minimized. While the operation of the gifts is of vital importance to our personal life and the life and work of the Church, **nothing can take the place of God's Word and nothing should be given priority over it**. Indeed the Word of God is the filter through which every word of knowledge (and all other gifts) should be passed, and the mirror in which the gifts should be perfectly reflected. The Word of God is always our foundation, being the unchanging and eternal expression of our unchanging God. It is the Word which declares and reveals God's mind on all that matters, and should therefore be our focus, and the standard by which everything else is judged.

WHO IS THE CONTROLLER OF THE GIFTS ?

When operating in the gifts, we should never think that we have control of them or that we can turn them on and off at will. In this regard scripture tells us:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:11 But all these work that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally (individually) as He (the Holy Spirit) will (at His discretion for He is in control of His gifts).

HEBREWS 2:4 God also bearing them witness (those who spoke of the way of salvation), both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will (it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring about the will of the Father) . . .

The Holy Spirit is always in control of His gifts and His power, for the gifts will only operate when and how He desires them to.

There is security in this, for if we were in control of God's power, we would very likely cause more problems than we would solve. We would probably develop our own theories to try to attract people to the Lord, and in the process, produce a side-show approach to Christianity.

We need to remember that God is not on show and does not have to prove Himself. He displayed His love at Calvary when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. All He wants Christians to do is to live in His Word, and to do His will - sharing His truth with others in wisdom and leaving the rest to Him. It is the Anointing on the Word of truth, spoken in wisdom and love, which speaks to people's hearts, not our own so-called knowledge, or cleverness or flamboyance. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people in regard to sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).

Also, when we operate in any of the gifts of the Spirit, we should always remember that the Spirit Himself is the source, not us. We are only the pipeline which bring the living water - if the Spirit wills it! We should therefore always give Him the glory, rather than try to bask in it ourselves! Amen.

It is God's perfect order which brings us, as we mature, to a greater and greater reliance on Him for all we need. Only in Him, as we yield and have a contrite, repentant spirit, can we receive the graces and energies needed to do His will (Isaiah 57:15; Philippians 2:12-13). Just as we are conscious of needing His grace to empower us if we are to walk in righteousness and do His will, our total reliance must be on the Lord in this area of the gifts of the Spirit. Then we will know indeed that we are only the channels through which He can deliver His power, as and when He wills. Then the glory will be the Lord's and His alone. Amen.

DESIRING THE BEST GIFT

Although the gifts belong to the Holy Spirit, to distribute as He wills, we are told in 1 Corinthians 12:31:

1 CORINTHIANS 12:31 But covet (desire) earnestly the best gifts . . .

“covet earnestly the best gifts”

The Lord tells us to desire (believe for) *“the best gifts.”* However, this scripture is often wrongly interpreted in Christian circles. This is because Christians have been taught to desire those gifts they perceive as being superior, and generally it has been considered that the gifts of healings and miracles are the greatest gifts. Christians therefore usually desire to operate in the gifts of healings and miracles - so they can lay hands on people and see the mighty power of God bring healing and restoration to their lives. In other words, people generally seek after the power gifts.

This is, however, an incorrect approach to the gifts. To *“covet earnestly the best gifts”* means to desire, as led by the Holy Spirit, to operate in the gift which will best meet the need of the situation that is at hand. We should therefore desire the gift which will suit whatever circumstance presents itself, i.e. the gift or gifts which are appropriate in any given situation. So in order to be prepared beforehand for every possible eventuality, we need to desire to operate in all the gifts. We also need to be accounted worthy to operate in God’s power before we will be able to do so. God’s Word instructs us in this regard to:

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 Study to show yourself approved unto God (one who has been tested by trial and has passed the test), a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (handling) the Word of truth.

There are many Christians who operate in the gifts of healings, as the Spirit wills, because this is what they have believed for. However they are not necessarily operating in any of the other gifts because they have not thought it important to believe for them.

In order to examine this subject more closely, let's use the example of a lady who is in a wheelchair. She approaches a mature Christian of faith who is baptized in the Holy Spirit, seeking healing of her infirmity.

What would be the best gift to help this lady in her situation? It may be a gift of healing or even the working of a miracle, depending on the condition of her body.

The first thing the mature Christian should do, however, is to ask the Lord if there are blockages that need to be removed before the lady can receive from God. If such be the case, a word of knowledge or the discerning of spirits would be needed to reveal the source of the problem. Then this person would also need a word of wisdom to know how best to deal with the knowledge given.

In some cases, people desiring prayer may need specific teaching to help prepare them to receive from the Spirit of God, e.g. teaching in regard to Divine healing. At other times, there may be a demonic force (promoting unforgiveness, resentment, unbelief, etc.) which could be blocking them from receiving. The operation of the gifts can thus help the person who is ministering to another clear the way for the power of God to flow.

Once these problems have been dealt with and all the conditions have been met, the Spirit may say, "Now is the time to pray." Referring back to the woman in the wheelchair, the Holy Spirit, through the mature Christian's faith, would then give the gift required to make the lady whole, whether it be a gift of healing or the working of a miracle, or both.

An example of not operating in the right gift would be a person coming to a fellow Christian for healing and having the fellow Christian speak out in the gift of public tongues. Would this be the best (the most appropriate and effective) gift for this situation? Of course not. It would not help the person at all in his or her time of need.

Alternatively, if a person came to a minister for direction from the Spirit of God and was told through the gift of prophecy of areas of his life that needed to be changed, then this would have been the best gift in this instance.

No particular gift is more valuable or more important than any other. There is no difference, for they are all equal. We cannot differentiate between them and say, for example, the gifts of healings are better than a word of knowledge, or a word of wisdom is better than different kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues. Each gift has its purpose and its place so that God's will may be accomplished, and each gift will be effective in different situations.

Through the gifts, the Holy Spirit can reveal His will to us in any set of circumstances. Then armed with this knowledge, we can gain the confidence needed to pray in faith so that others' needs may be met by the power of God.

We need to remember, however, that every situation is different and no two people are the same. Because of this, we cannot develop formulas for dealing with particular problems. Each person needs to be treated as an individual, according to the leading of the Spirit - for only the Spirit of God knows the complexities of a person's life, and it is only He Who can direct us accordingly. So we need to seek His will when we minister or pray for others, and listen to His directions. Only God knows the heart of every man, and He alone knows in every case what is needed.

***HEBREWS 4:13** Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight (refers to God as the Creator of all things): but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do (to Whom we must give account). (E.S.B.)*

Without the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives, we will be very limited in our ability to help our fellow man, for we will lack the direction and wisdom needed to help bring the power of God into people's lives in appropriate and meaningful ways. We can always pray random or general prayers, or else focus our prayer specifically on what we think is the person's real need or problem. But unless we learn from the Spirit of God what is actually needed in a person's life, we will usually be stabbing in the dark. Therefore we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit so He can show us what is needed when we pray for and minister to others. We should always rely on His direction in every situation, for the specific leading of the Holy Spirit is vital to most situations where one is ministering to

others. We should therefore be careful never to develop set patterns and formulas to deal with incredibly complex human diversity.

WHEN WILL GOD RELEASE HIS POWER ?

Background Reading: Galatians 4:1-2; Ephesians 3:14-20

It is God's will for all Christians to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, for this is part of our progressive growth in the Lord. After salvation (and water baptism), this next step in our walk is needed so that we may progress in faith and deepen our relationship with Him. Without the Spirit Baptism, the Believer will be severely limited in their ability to gain, in a potential sense, the knowledge and faith required to do God's will both in their personal life and as a Disciple of Christ. Once Christians receive the Spirit Baptism, they are clothed with power from on high. They then have the potential to operate in the power of God in a far greater way through the gifts - given, of course, for service.

ACTS 1:8 But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses (both through personal lifestyle and the proclamation of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit) unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

JOHN 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do (speaks of quantity rather than quality); because I go unto My Father.

When some Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit, however, they assume they can go out and help save multitudes. They believe that they are now able to operate in the gifts of the Spirit and therefore have access to the power of God in a far greater way than before. While this may be correct, many do not experience the success they had envisaged. Many then ask, "Why am I not operating in the gifts of the Spirit and the power of God?"

Many Christians, especially in their early faith-walk, are rebellious, sometimes unknowingly. They don't bother to truly seek God's face and His perfect will for their lives, desiring rather to "do their own thing." Many therefore tend to do only what they want to do when they feel like it - rather than really seeking to do what God desires. They choose their own pathways then expect God to bless them. They may do as God is directing in some areas, but in others, they reject God's direction, knowingly or unknowingly. Many pick and choose what they want to do without any regard for what the Spirit of God is trying to tell or show them.

This is one of the main reasons many Christians are not operating in the gifts of the Spirit and the power of God. Furthermore, if Christians live this kind of lifestyle, and continue to display immaturity of this nature, they will never operate in the power of God in the way that He desires them to. We could call these Believers "supermarket Christians," those who choose from the shelf only what they feel like, leaving behind that which does not appeal to their flesh (Galatians 5:16-17). What is needed is discipleship, and a complete surrender of one's whole life to God. If we desire the Lord's will above all else, then by His strength and grace, the flesh will not gain the upper hand (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 9:23-24).

God will generally only allow Christians to operate in His revelation power to the level they can safely handle. Sometimes, however, people misuse the revelation and vocal gifts. For example, a word of knowledge can be used without wisdom and this then becomes a misuse of that which God has given. People who continue to misuse God's gifts (usually the revelation gifts) will eventually find they are unable to operate in them. This is because the Lord needs to be able to trust that we will use His gifts wisely. We can see now why He tells us that we have the potential to operate in His power. This does not necessarily mean, however, that we will automatically operate in this potential, for God's power will only be released "as the Spirit wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Note: When people begin to operate in the revelation and vocal gifts, mistakes can be quite common. Having good leadership (e.g. pastors and elders) to give guidance in these areas is therefore of paramount importance, especially to the uninitiated and those desiring to move accurately in the gifts (Hebrews 13:17).

The Holy Spirit can deal with young or immature Christians in the following way. The Lord may allow His gifts to operate and His power (especially His revelation power) to flow through young Christians when they are under the leadership of mature Christians. We have all heard the saying “There is safety in numbers.” And such is the case when mature Christians are present to supervise young Christians. When young Christians are alone, however, God seemingly regulates His power according to their level of maturity, and so the gifts may not operate so readily.

As an illustration of this principle, responsible parents would not allow their ten year old son to have access to a firearm and to do with it as he pleased. They may allow him to have a shot or two at a target range if they were present, making sure that the gun was loaded correctly and that everything was properly supervised. They would show him how to hold the gun and point it towards the target. Then when the parents walked away, they would take the gun with them. This would be for both the child’s sake and the people around him - for a child of that age is not mature enough to handle a weapon of such destructive potential.

Similarly, if the Lord released too much power through the revelation gifts to Christians who were not mature enough to use it wisely, the result could be the destruction of other people’s lives, or maybe even their own. This could be likened to children playing with dynamite. They might know how to detonate it, but because of their lack of wisdom and understanding, they could cause themselves and others very serious injury. Indeed power can be very dangerous in immature or inexperienced hands. For example, immature Christians can become proud and egotistical, forgetting that they are only vessels, and that fruit rather than gifts is the benchmark of spiritual maturity. Once operating in pride, such Christians will enter into error in the revelation and vocal gifts, and wrong direction, if heeded, can harm or even destroy others’ lives. Thus God will not normally release His power in any great way until we have the knowledge, wisdom and maturity to use it responsibly.

Note: What we have just taught in this section has been referring mainly to the release of revelation power. God is even more careful concerning the release of His power through the power gifts, especially in public meetings.

GUIDELINES FOR OPERATING IN THE GIFTS

There is a principle contained in scripture that we are to prophesy according to our faith (Romans 12:6), and this principle applies to all the gifts. We should therefore not try to operate in the gifts beyond our level of faith and maturity. In desiring to operate in spiritual gifts, we thus need to keep in line with God's timing for our spiritual development. If we press too hard for revelation gifts, for example, we may receive information from the wrong source - Satan. Remember that the Holy Spirit is very gentle and we must be open to His promptings when He chooses to speak. We cannot force Him to reveal knowledge and indeed if we try to, we will merely be opening the door to either the devil's direction or our own imagination. To operate in the revelation gifts can be compared to using a gun with a "hair" (very sensitive) trigger. And as we have said, the leading of the Spirit very often comes through Elijah's "*still small voice*" (1 Kings 19:12).

Thus we need to be extremely sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Also people must be open and not have biased, preconceived or predetermined ideas if they are to hear the voice of the Lord correctly. This is another reason to study the Word of God and develop a foundation of sound doctrine - so as to have a proper filter to use for spiritual knowledge that may have come via the gifts of the Spirit. God's gifts are perfect but man is not, being fallible in this area, and needing God's help so that error will not enter and spread. People's lives have been wrecked by false words of knowledge, so it is wise to be careful in this area and to seek the Lord's will with an open heart. We can also always ask for confirmation from the Lord of any "words" given, as well as seeking trusted ministerial counsel. Note that bias in any area will prevent us discerning the voice of the Lord in that area. The gifts can also be blocked by tension, fear, confusion, etc., or even the desire to obtain a particular answer. In other words, to approach the Lord in order to obtain an answer you have already decided upon will not result in God's truth being revealed!

In order to operate properly in the gifts of the Spirit, the Believer needs to pass through three doors. These are:

1. The door of the Baptism in the Spirit (which gives the Believer access to the power of God through the gifts).

2. The door of openness (being yielded) to the Spirit so that He may use the Believer in this way.

3. The door of God's will (for the gifts operate "as the Spirit will").

Once the Believer is baptized in the Spirit, he or she is properly equipped in a potential sense to access the power of God through the gifts. However all three doors must be opened before God's power can manifest.

Concerning public ministry (or ministry to the masses), God does not generally allow His power to flow until the minister or ministries concerned are accounted worthy by Him to operate in this power. This is particularly true regarding the gifts of healings, miracles and faith - the power gifts. Certainly it would appear that the Lord is particularly careful about releasing His dunamis power in a major way, and will only do so when He knows the minister concerned can be trusted to handle such a situation with wisdom and humility. Alternatively, the one being used to bring forth the gift will be coming under (submitting to) mature oversight in the meetings (Hebrews 13:17).

On an individual level, however, we still see God, through His mercy and grace, healing people - but this usually happens in response to individual openness and faith.

Note: It should be mentioned that people often become sidetracked with the wonder factor involved in the operation of the gifts, especially in the early stages of learning or experience. While this may be a natural reaction, it should not continue indefinitely - for the gifts are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are given for a purpose, that being to help other people. The gifts are thus tools to assist us to do the Father's work and operate in the power of truth.

Some ministries, for example, that of the Evangelist, seem to operate more in the healing gifts than other ministries, for instance,

that of the Pastor. This does not mean that the Pastor is at fault, but rather that God uses the Pastor to teach his people to live by faith. However concerning the Evangelist, the Word declares that there will be signs and wonders following the preaching of the Gospel. It does seem that in this setting, it is easier for those people who are listening and accepting to receive healing and experience miracles without really knowing much (Mark 16:15-20). Remember, to whom much is given, much is required. And conversely, to whom little has been given, of them little is required.

We are to seek the Giver of the gifts rather than the gifts themselves. This will require a letting go of self's ambitions and desires so that we can surrender to the Spirit's will in our lives. Let us then seek to use the gifts according to these governing principles.

Furthermore, it must be said that the Lord's Word is final on the Believer's condition and what should be their priority. He would rather someone limp into heaven - in other words die of cancer but be saved - than someone be physically fit, only to die and go to hell. Therefore someone's salvation is of so much more importance than their healing, for example.

3 JOHN 1:2 Beloved, I wish (desire) above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers (through the hearing of the Word via teaching, preaching and study).

The message of Calvary - the Atonement - must always be the primary and even the secondary message of the Church. Everything else must line up behind this teaching which must be our priority because it is the foundation for everything else. It must be us in Christ, motivated, empowered and moved by Him, in His timing. Amen.

So let us seek first the Kingdom of God and its treasures through the graces that would cause us to live a life which pleases the Father. Every day then let us go to the Cross in order to repent of known and unknown sin, then yield to the Holy Spirit so as to take up our cross of self-denial - not in the power of the flesh, or the power of self-will, but in the power of the Spirit. Through the

energizing power of God's Divine Nature we are able to do this - there is no other way to please the Lord. Let His will be our goal, and let our strength be in Him, not us! Amen. And let us desire the gifts of the Spirit, as the Word instructs (1 Corinthians 14:1), so that we may be effective servants of our Lord and Master, prepared and available to be used in whatever situation presents itself.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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