

The Gifts of the Spirit

by Alan Redpath

The Holy Spirit is essential for Christian living and ministry, providing power and effectiveness to our work and service, and distributing gifts to each individual as He wills.

Duration: 47:43

Scripture: Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-30, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Gifts of the Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of unity and the role of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ. He highlights the need for every member of the church to work together and support one another. The preacher also discusses the various gifts and roles within the church, emphasizing that not everyone has the same gifts or abilities. He concludes by pointing out that love is the most excellent way and encourages the congregation to earnestly desire the higher gifts.

Transcript

and ask for the power of your spirit to work in us. We know that even the words of scripture can be dead unless we allow you, by your spirit, to apply them to our life. And so, Father, we ask that you will be with us now, by your spirit, open our minds, speak to our hearts, flood into our lives, that we may receive your word.

We ask your blessing on Dr. Redpath as he brings your word to us, and we pray that we will truly be expectant and waiting that your word, for each of us as individuals, may come into us this morning, to enable us to serve you more effectively, where you have put it. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you. Let's sing a chorus together.

We'll start with number 181. Open my eyes, Lord, I would see Jesus. Make it personal.

Open my eyes, Lord. 181. Thank you, Jesus, that you came.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about his lovely name. I want you to turn this morning to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. I'm reading in the Revised Standard Version.

Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols. However, you may have been moved.

Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus be cursed. And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. Now, there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service but the same Lord.

And there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all and every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 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 ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues.

To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body which we think less honorable, we invest with the greater honor.

And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually, members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. This is the word of God, and following that chapter is the supreme chapter, as you remember, on the subject of love.

Let's sing our chorus together again. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, God, for sending me.

Speak, Lord, for thy servant here is. Speak just now. The message to meet my need, which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word, and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me. For Jesus' sake, amen. On Thursday at the Catholic Convention, the theme of ministry is always the theme of the Holy Spirit.

It's a great pity that these days in the churches as a whole, the Holy Spirit is either forgotten, neglected, or misunderstood. The one who was sent to unite the body of Christ is the center of controversy. So we need to proceed carefully this morning.

And I'm sticking very close to the Scripture. Because I find that Christian work these days is so planned that we need no longer depend on the Spirit of God. Christian living is so organized that we have no longer any tantrum.

But Jesus said in John 15 verse 5, without me you can do nothing. That's not without a shot in the arm at Kizzik, not without occasional visits to Spring Harvest, etc. Not just without a boost now and again, but without my life, you can do nothing.

It was A. W. Pilzer, whose books I have recommended to you all. I hope you'll get them. They're worth reading.

He said in his book, In Pursuit of God, I think, if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on. And nobody would know any difference. If the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what we did would stop.

Everybody would know the difference. That's pretty shattering. But it's true, we have substitute for Holy Spirit strategy programs.

There is a complete dichotomy, I find, in a church business meeting between the opening prayer, which is very evangelical, and the closing benediction, and what goes on between the two. Have you ever been at a church business meeting, if you have, please tell me, at a church business meeting where halfway through suddenly somebody says, Look, just stop a minute, let's see what God wants us to do. We don't want Him to bless our plan, we want His plan that we may carry it out.

I have very seldom seen that. And yet, as I said to you the other day, you know as well as I do, the Holy Spirit is not an optional extra. Come to reproduce one super-deluxe Christian per generation.

He is a substitute on earth for the bodily presence of Jesus, 2000 years ago. And His word to all of us is, He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Now I believe that the Holy Spirit has something to say to every Christian, every one of us.

And it's sufficient to begin with if He has one who will give Him time to listen, and to stop all His activity for a moment, and just wait upon Him that He may speak. Because all fruitful Christian service begins as the Holy Spirit speaks to us, and we obey Him. Of course He has many ways of doing that.

Always He speaks through His word. The word of God, without the Spirit of God, is dead. I don't care how fundamental, how evangelical it is, it's dead.

The Holy Spirit, an experience of the Holy Spirit that isn't based upon the word of God, is dangerous. But when you have the word of God linked to the Spirit of God, you are dynamite. And that's what we're praying we may have as the outcome of these days, these precious days together.

I want to concentrate this morning on this great chapter of the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit, of course, are for ministry. The fruit of the Spirit is the character.

We need both, of course. But this evening, Nick will be speaking to us on the fruit of the Spirit. I want to concentrate this morning on chapter 12 here, on the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, presuming you have your New Testament open, just let me carefully underline some things that we have got to understand. Look first at verse 13. And notice the word, all.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Now, look at verse 28.

And notice the word which appears in the Authorized Version, and is implied in all the others, the word some. God has appointed some in the Authorized. God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers, in various kinds of terms.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? Notice that word. And the implication, some. Now, turn with me to verse 4. Let me just read a moment.

Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all, in every one, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Now, what do you get from that when you think it through? I get this, that he knows what is best for each one of us, those six. The same God who inspires them all in every one, and to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. And verse 11, all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

If you read that chapter for yourself, you'll notice that there are 14 gifts of the Spirit here. None of them are natural talents. None of them.

Verse 4. There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. Varieties of service, but the same Lord. And you have that phrase, by the same Spirit, 11 times in those two verses.

Therefore, because of that, I should never envy the gifts of somebody else. I should never seek to covet them. God knows what is best for each one of us, for the common good of the whole body.

But we need all the gifts within the fellowship of the body. You may find a church, a local church, which doesn't have all the gifts. But I mean, the whole body, worldwide, must have all the gifts.

That's the teaching of verses 14 through 21, where there are 17 references to the body, as an example. Here is the foot, the eyes, the ears, the hand, and the head. All go up.

All go to make the body. And will you please note, in verse 15, nobody can say, I don't belong. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Nobody can say, I don't count, I don't matter, I don't belong. And notice, in verse 21, nobody can say, other people are unnecessary. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

Neither the head to the feet, I have no need of you. So none of us can say that that other person is not really necessary. And in verse 26, everybody should care for everybody else.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. If you walked along the beach at Berkeley one day, and you stuck your foot into some stone, and you got hurt, what happens? Immediately your eyes look at it, and begin to shed tears.

And immediately your hands come down towards it, and your head bows, and every member of your body is concentrating on getting rid of the problem at your foot. When one member of the body suffers, everybody suffers with it. That's a wonderful church, when you find a fellowship like that.

When people really show that they care. And that means, in verse 17, there must never be any individualism. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the smell? Not one member of the body can act or work or serve independent of others.

Nobody can do it alone. So many people try to do just that. No independence.

And no isolation, verse 15, if the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. You can't act on your own. No individualism, verse 17.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? And that teaches me this tremendous truth, that my place in the body is not my choosing. Nobody can say that. Everybody ought to be able to say that my place in the body of Christ is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the trust of the Holy Spirit.

It's not my choosing. I'm not what I am in the body, neither are you. Because of some teachings or oversights or what have you, they may be the instruments who've carried it out.

But I'm where I am in the body of the sovereign working of the Spirit of God. And therefore, when a crisis comes, I'll be very slow to resign. You'll remember that, won't you? The moment things get tough, the tendency is to go elsewhere.

Form a little group on your own. You'll be very slow to resign. And that always tells me, too, that I am where I am by the sovereignty of the Spirit of God.

And if I realize that, it will keep me from being dissatisfied with my place and envying the gifts of other people. Now let me put all that together, because that's simply the introduction, and ask you very lovingly, but firmly, as a little digression, do you ever ask the Lord to make you like honey? Like treacle? I do. What is treacle like? Firm and sweet.

It's possible to be firm and nasty. It's possible to be sweet and mushy, soft. But if you learn to be firm and sweet, that's Jesus.

And I want to be that this morning. I don't want to play this down, because we have very controversial areas to travel along. I don't want to play it down.

At the same time, I don't want to be unkind or critical. So, let us bear in mind that nobody since Pentecost, until Jesus comes again, has ever had, or will have, all the gifts of the Spirit. It is absolutely impossible.

Of course, the list in chapter 12 is not complete. Thank the Lord, there's a further list in Ephesians 4, which includes evangelists and pastors, which wouldn't have been a bad way. And fortunately, there's another list in Romans chapter 12, which includes serving, exhorting, and giving.

You just can't have all the gifts. But you can have all the character. Ephesians 5, 18.

Be being filled with the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace. Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness.

Faith, meekness, self-control. Love, joy, peace, that's my relationship to the Lord. Patience, meekness, my relationship with other people.

Faith, meekness, self-control, my attitude to myself. You can't have all the gifts, but you can have all the fruit. And therefore, nobody has a right to demand that everybody else should have their particular gift.

But all of us should reveal all the fruit. Got it? I'm not pleading for a manifestation of the gifts apart from the fruit. Nor from a manifestation of the fruit apart from the gifts.

Both should be combined in an effective testimony to Jesus. But gifts, as I said, are related to ministry and service. And the Lord is sovereign in their distribution.

Fruit is related to character. And his purpose for us is that we should be all filled up with all the fullness of God. To develop body life.

That's Ephesians 3.19. It should, therefore, be absolutely clear to us that to say that to speak in tongues is an essential evidence of the baptism of the Spirit is absolutely unbiblical. And it's unbiblical on two grounds. First, not all Christians can have that particular gift.

If this were the one thing above all others which we should have, it would be made upon in every New Testament letter. Instead, it's only mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Then only in three chapters.

And then we're due to keep it under control. Furthermore, it's no evidence of maturity. For the Corinthian church was utterly carnal.

But claimed to possess all the gifts. And the second reason. The phrase baptism in the Spirit needs to be defined from Scripture.

1 Corinthians 12.13. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Baptism in the Bible, in the New Testament especially, always refers to a beginning. An initiation.

Acts 1.5. Acts 2.4. You have it. The words baptism and fullness are used in reference to the same experience. But baptism never occurs again in the Acts of the Apostles, except in two cases.

It occurs in the household, do you remember, of Cornelius. Chapter 10. That was a baptism, a Pentecost, for the Gentiles.

He never even heard of the Holy Spirit. And the disciples spoke to him, and they were baptized in the Spirit. And spoke in tongues.

And you have it again. Have you ever noticed what a clear letter were in chapter 19? From Ephesus. And they were so cringed and clear that Paul asked them, have you received the Holy Spirit? They said, we've never heard of him.

And Paul spoke to them about it, and they were baptized in the Spirit, and spoke in tongues. Those two cases are a repetition of Pentecost to the Gentiles. The tongues in which the disciples spoke on the day of Pentecost were nothing to do with the gift of tongues.

They didn't need an interpreter. There were fifteen different languages spoken by people of fifteen different countries. Different thing altogether.

The same thing in Cornelius and in Ephesus. And you only have that word, baptism in the Spirit, once again in Luke 12.50, where it speaks of an overwhelming, a baptism for Jesus to be baptized, and how I'm expecting it to be accomplished. Confusion arises when one of these experiences is stressed at the expense of the other.

Let me just put it simply this way. The baptism in a new relationship occurs once. The filling of the Spirit and growth and maturity of relationship occurs over and over again.

I'll quote Charles Inwood. I should be safe in quoting him here. The great Methodist preacher of, say, a couple of generations ago.

When he was at Keswick, he said, There is no such thing as the once and for all experience of the fullness of the Spirit of God. It is a moment-by-moment faith in a moment-by-moment filling. A constant appropriation of a constant supply from Jesus Christ himself.

At the moment I begin to believe, at that moment I begin to receive. And when I keep on believing, I keep on receiving. I think that's very wonderful.

It's so simple. Every step of faith and obedience every day increases my capacity for more and more of Jesus. Every step of unbelief and disobedience shrinks it.

And the question always is, Lord, are you filling me right now? Why is that? Because we need so much. And therefore constantly have to go back for filling over and over and over again. To some people, and let me be careful to say this, to some people who perhaps have had a very nominal experience of Christ when a new revelation and commitment takes place in their lives, and I would include myself among these, it's like a fresh baptism into his power.

If you'll excuse me for being very untheological, it's like being born again or over again. The moment I suddenly come to realize that the Christian life is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord, what a release of tension. What a release of tension.

I take, he undertakes. Till that moment, he's been resident in my life, but from that moment he becomes president in charge. It was Hudson Taylor, wasn't it, who on the beach at Brighton after years of Christian experience said, he was almost at the end of his tether, it isn't what Hudson Taylor does for God that matters, it's what God can do in and through Hudson Taylor.

That's it. Therefore, if all that is true, I trust you are with me, there's something that arises out of it that I must understand. That is, that every Christian is a charismatic Christian.

Charismatic. Grace gives. If I haven't got any grace, and I haven't got a gift, I'm not even a Christian.

I think it's terribly sad that in the mind of so many people the charismatic movement is identified with the glossolalia only and with speaking in tongues. It's far wider than that. The charismatic movement has made the greatest impact upon Christian life in this century.

And the trouble has been, of course, that whenever there is reality, you always have counterfeit. The devil is very clever at that. And many people have been completely disillusioned by the insistence of some that everyone should have that particular gift.

Therefore, the reaction of so many people has been, don't touch it. We've got it all. Keep clear of it.

We've got it all. We've got it all. Really? If that's the case, why are we like what we are? We've got it all.

And you look at the average congregation on a Sunday morning, the joy of it all. Sometimes one is almost in a state of despair. It blew me a lot of folks to look, many times.

Thank the Lord. And I'm not saying this to sort of get out of a situation. I'm saying it because it's a different situation here.

Because there are Christians here who are just full of the joy of the Lord and eagerly wanting more. But it's not always like that. Where is vital Christianity? I refuse to be put off by counterfeit.

For my heart hungers for more and more of Jesus and a fresh infilling of his Spirit every day of my life. I wish people would forget the charismatic movement. The only charismatic movement I know began at Pentecost.

It's been going on ever since with greater or lesser power. Movement that began 2,000 years ago. Again, all the gifts of the Spirit must be operating.

Why is it that some people would tell us that certain gifts of the Spirit such as prophecy and healing and tongues in particular were withdrawn after the first century and are not for this age? How can we arbitrarily dispense with three gifts because we don't understand them and are perhaps a bit afraid of them yet we accept all the others gladly? Surely the whole Church as never before needs them all in love and indeed will need them all in these last days for Satan is turning on all his power against us evidence in the rise of witchcraft Satan worships and all the allurements of the offense. You can't match the devil with second class weapons. We need all the gifts.

Some will have some, some another but all of them scattered through the whole Church if the Church is to stand in days like these. The evidence of the reality of these gifts especially if I may say so, the gift of tongues is that those who have it very rarely speak of it. I have people I love dearly in my own family who have this gift but I would never know unless they ask them.

I know the difference in their lives because there's a graciousness and a sweetness and an openness and along with a fresh experience of the fullness of his blessing they have been touched with this particular gift. But you see the gift of tongues is for worship not for witness. You'll see that in chapter 14.

I know many people who have received a fresh fullness of the Spirit and in doing so have received the gift of tongues. But I would never know that I see Jesus shining through them. And there are many people who speak in tongues who have not been filled with the Spirit.

And there are many people who are filled with the Spirit who don't speak in tongues. I went to a service at a convention in Red Hill that's very near where Nick's car lives. It wasn't in his church but several churches were participating.

And I spoke for the usual hour. And at the end of it a lady came up and said to me Oh it's such a pity you haven't got it. And I said I beg your pardon ma'am.

Oh she said it's such a pity you haven't got it. Come to our church and get it. I said my dear friend I'm not looking for it.

I'm looking for him. I'm not looking for the gift. I'm looking for the giver.

I think we need to ask the Lord really to help us to keep all this in balance. Remembering what the Lord Jesus said was the function of the Holy Spirit to make him real. To make the truth, the word of God live.

And to make the witness of my life effective. I've got to learn and you have too to live in the light day by day of Holy Spirit love. And strange to say that between chapter 14 and chapter 12 is chapter 13.

A tremendous chapter on Holy Spirit love. No time to go into that today. But just let me ask you just one thing.

Do you remember in Old Testament times that the priest among his equipment he had a threshold. Do you know what that was for? It was to keep the sacrifice under the flame. And I think we Christians need to ask the Lord to do just that for us.

Keep the sacrifice of our lives right under the flame of the cross of Calvary. That he may be able to release his Spirit in fullness upon us day by day. Because you see, our unlikeness to Jesus is exactly in proportion to our failure to live at the cross.

Let the flame burn and burn and burn in us and the Holy Spirit with it in all his fullness and his power. Well I think that's all I'm going to tell you this morning. I just pray that it's got through and that somehow you may be able to rejoice rejoice in the gifts that other people have so that you haven't and thank the Lord for the gifts he's given you and use it for his glory and not to be jealous of somebody else.

Let's pray together. Let me say that it's time after service if you wish to come and speak to me I'd love to, if you wish to. Meantime, just let's ask him to have his way with us each one of us and that we would be ready to receive any gift he has for us and never to covet somebody else's.

Never to insist that somebody should have ours. Lord Jesus, we pray that the fellowship to which we belong may grow in likeness to you and we know that can only be so as each person in it is using the gift of it that you have given them not envious of someone else not coveting somebody else's but rejoicing in that gift and using it for your glory. Spirit of the living God fall afresh on each one of us.

Greatest, merciful, moldest, and fillest. Spirit of the living God fall afresh on each one of us. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to sing together a lovely hymn May the mind of Christ my Savior live in me from day to day. I can't remember what number it is.

1-5-7 1-5-7 May the mind of Christ my Savior. Everybody. May the blessing of God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit rest upon each one of us and remain with us today and forever.

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