

Are the Gifts of the Spirit for Today?

by David Guzik

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today, and they are available to believers who seek to experience the supernatural power of God.

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Scripture: Hebrews 2:1

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Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of paying close attention to the word of God and not drifting away from it. He highlights the steadfastness of the word spoken through angels and warns about the consequences of neglecting the great salvation offered by God. The speaker then discusses the gifts and offices given by Christ, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. He explains that these gifts are meant for Christians who are actively engaged in the work of the ministry, and that God promises unique protection and effectiveness to those who are obedient.

Transcript

And tonight I feel impressed to share a study with you on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, I want to deal with the question this evening. Did the gifts of the Holy Spirit pass away? Are they for today? Now, this may seem like a silly question to some of you.

You may say, well, of course, they're for today. And, you know, you may have your own reasons for thinking so, but you should be aware that there's a significant segment of the Christian community today that would say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today, that they died when the apostles died. And the people who teach this and believe this, they love Jesus.

They want to see the gospel of Jesus Christ advanced. And I would also say that I don't think that they're stupid. And so why would there be such a substantial disagreement over such a matter? Well, let's take a look at it scripturally and I'll show you why there I believe there is a disagreement.

But first, I want to deal with the whole issue of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit in the church today. You know, I think it's very important, folks, for us to understand and to constantly come back to two core principles. That there must be the word of God prominent among the people of God.

Line by line, verse by verse, the whole counsel of God's word. And then the second core principle is that there must be a freedom and a power in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Among God's people.

And might I say that both of them are absolutely essential, both of them. You can't just say that one of them is important. Both of them are important.

And as I look at the church today and by and large and perhaps in many ways that our own congregation, I would say that the crying need is for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. You think of our own congregation, I think that by and large we are well fed. We do not have serious problems of heresy or doctrinal debate or people wanting to throw out their Bibles in our midst.

Yet there's a crying need and desire for more and more of the Holy Spirit of God in our midst. Well, I think we need to have a settled assurance in our hearts that God means it for today and means all of it for today, not just a aspect of it. I think that this great emphasis on the word of God and on the spirit of God has been a distinguishing mark and a wonderful characteristic of Calvary Chapel ministry and of Calvary Chapel churches in general.

You should know that in the Christian community at large, Calvary Chapel churches are properly known for their balance in the matter of dealing with the operations and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You know, one way that I know that Calvary Chapel's in general have a well-respected balance is because at times we get criticized from both ends. It's sometimes been said that we're too Pentecostal for the Baptists and too Baptist for the Pentecostals.

That there really is a biblical balance in there. Well, let me say this about balance. Balance is meaningless unless it's a biblical balance.

You don't want to strike a balance between truth and heresy. Here's truth. Here's heresy.

Let's look for a balance. And no, you want balance, but you want it to be a biblical balance. Now, if we're going to focus on this question tonight, did the gifts of the Holy Spirit pass away? I need to really clarify and focus in on this question, because virtually every Bible believing Christian would answer that question one way.

No. And I mean, everybody. When you really think about it, I don't know of a single pastor, of a single church leader, of a single Bible commentary, commentator who says that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have passed away, that they're not for today.

Let me show you what I mean by that. I may be confusing you, but hold on for a moment. Turn your Bibles to Romans chapter 12.

Let's take a look at verses six, seven and eight. Here is one of the places in the New Testament where spiritual gifts are described. Romans chapter 12, beginning at verse six, Paul writes, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.

Let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith or ministry. Let us use it in our ministry.

He who teaches and teaching, he who exhorts and exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. Now, what are the spiritual gifts that the apostle

Paul describes in that passage? Well, prophecy, ministry, that's in the sense of service, teaching, exhortation, giving leadership and mercy. Now, can anybody quote for me a Bible teacher that you know of, a pastor, a commentator, a radio speaker who believes that the gift of teaching is no longer for today? Of course, they all believe it, they all use it or hope to use it, at least.

Can anybody name for me a single pastor, Bible teacher, whatever commentator who believes that the gift of exhortation is not for today? The gift of giving good heavens, every minister wants the gift of giving to be for today. We rejoice when God's people are blessed with the spirit of liberality and give unto the work of the Lord. You see, what I want you to notice in this is that there's all different kinds or all different varieties of gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So when I say that there's not a single teacher that believes that the gifts of the spirit have passed away, what I really mean is that there's not a single Bible teacher who believes that all the gifts of the spirit have passed away. Some Bible teachers, some pastors believe that some of the gifts of the spirit have passed away. But again, you look at this list, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, everybody agrees that those are for today.

Let's take a look at another list. Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter four, looking at verses seven and eight primarily, but we'll also take a look at verse 11. Again, that's Ephesians chapter four, beginning at verse seven, it says.

But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Now look at verse 11 and he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers.

Well, look, here's the gifts or the offices that are listed here. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor teachers, by the way, you should know. And sometimes Christians speak today of the five fold ministry.

That's an erroneous understanding of this passage, because Ephesians chapter four, verse 11 does not list five ministries. It lists four ministries. Apostle, that's number one.

Prophets, that's number two evangelists. That's number three. Pastor teacher is number four.

It's very clear in the grammar of the ancient Greek that in that phrase, pastors and teachers Paul is referring to one office described by two terms. I've seen some pastors who take that as their title pastor teacher, and it's not an accurate title, according to Ephesians chapter four, verse 11. But again, what I would say is that virtually every Bible believing Christian believes that one or more of these gifts are for today.

Some people say that the gift of being an apostle perhaps is today here in a non authoritative sense. In other words, we don't have people writing scripture today as the apostle Paul did. You don't have to worry about an appendix being put into your Bible by an apostle or a prophet who's authoritative in the same way that the first century apostles and prophets were authoritative.

But certainly people would say that evangelists and pastor teachers are gifts given today. Look at first Peter chapter four, verses 10 and 11. That's another list describing spiritual gifts.

Most of the list that we have of spiritual gifts in the Bible were written by the apostle Paul. This is one that comes from the apostle Peter. Again, in first Peter chapter four, beginning at verse 10, Peter writes, and

he says, as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Well, here Peter describes two gifts, the gift of speaking and the gift of ministering or serving. Well, again, I would say virtually every Bible believing Christian believes that these gifts are for today. Is God uniquely blessing or uniquely inspiring by his spirit of people to speak, people to serve? Absolutely.

You would find this. I think you could go into the most well, I mean, I don't mean to associate any one particular denomination with this, but I think you'll understand what I mean when I say that you could go into the most Baptist of Baptist churches and they would believe that the gift of teaching, that the gift of speaking, that the gift of ministry is for today. Now, let's take a look at the most controversial list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we find in the scriptures.

And that's in First Corinthians, chapter 12, beginning at verse four. Go ahead and turn there. First Corinthians, chapter 12, beginning at verse four.

Thank you. First Corinthians, chapter 12, beginning of verse four, Paul writes, there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit, there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord and there are diversities of activities. But it is the same God who works all in all.

But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, to another, the word of knowledge through the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same spirit, to another, the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another, the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as he wills.

Now we get in to the list that many people say is not for today. Look at the gifts that Paul is here, the gift of the word of wisdom. That's where God speaks to somebody's heart and gives them a unique word of wisdom in a particular place.

It's just supernatural wisdom from above, given as a gift of God, the word of knowledge. That's supernatural knowledge given to somebody from God, where God just gives a person unique knowledge that they wouldn't have known on their own. Yet the spirit of God has revealed it to them.

The gift of faith is described. That's the ability to trust God supernaturally in a situation, I mean, beyond the expectation of faith. Do you remember when the apostle Peter and John, when they came to the gate, beautiful, and they saw that beggar who had been there for so many years and Peter looked at him and he said, you know, silver and gold, have I none but in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

Now, I don't think that took the gift of faith to say that. But when Peter reached down and grabbed the man's hand and pulled him to his feet, that took the gift of faith. That is supernatural faith at that moment.

And it was given by the Holy Spirit because it was fulfilled. The man was healed. Well, that brings us to the gifts of healing where people are supernaturally healed, where somebody prays for somebody or lays

hands on them and they are healed in a supernatural way.

As that man at the gate, beautiful, was healed. As other people were healed, as when the apostle Paul was bitten by a snake on the island of Malta and he shook it off and he was not harmed by that poisonous venom from that snake. It's because God gave him a unique gift of healing, a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit at that moment.

And on that same island, there was other ministry going on in the same way. And so supernatural healing in this way. The next gift, he describes the gift of miracles.

That's just kind of a catch all for miraculous things. The gift of prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues. Now, there are many people within the church today who would tell you God isn't giving these gifts anymore.

The Holy Spirit is not distributing these gifts. They are not for today. And I would strongly disagree with those folks, but I think we should phrase the question accurately.

The question is not are the gifts of the spirit for today, because everybody in the church believes that the gifts of the spirit are for today. It's the question more accurately is, are all the gifts of the Holy Spirit for today? Or, as God said, I'm going to take some of them back. Some of them I'll give to the church for a while.

Most people would say that God gave them to the church. Most people who disagree with what I think is the biblical position, most people would say God gave them to the church during the days of the apostles. But when the apostles died, God took certain gifts back, certain miraculous gifts.

So the gift of teaching remained within the church. But the gift of miracles went by the wayside. The gift of leading stayed within the church, but the gift of healing went out.

The gift of ministry stayed within the church, but the gift of tongues vanished from the earth when the apostles died. Now. What does the Bible say about this? Well, I think the Bible speaks to us very plainly and very clearly about the continuation of the gifts that they did not cease when the apostles or anyone else died, but that the Holy Spirit desires to work them in the church wherever there is a need and wherever people are willing.

Look at the promise of Mark, chapter 16. Go ahead and turn there in your Bibles. Mark, chapter 16, beginning at verse 17.

Now, you should know that there is some dispute among some Bible scholars whether or not Mark, the evangelist, actually wrote Mark, chapter 16, verses 17 and 18. Let's leave that controversy aside just for a moment. But I just wanted to begin here to take a look at these two verses where it says again, Mark, chapter 16, starting at verse 17.

It says, And these signs will follow those who believe in my name. They will cast out demons. They will speak with new tongues.

They will take up serpents. And if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

Now, friends, I don't know about you, but that's a simple and straightforward promise. In context, it was given to the apostles as they were commissioned to go out and do the work of preaching the gospel. In other words, and I hope I'm not mincing words in the ears of anybody here, but I don't think this promise really applies is really fleshed out in the life and in the heart of the Christian who's sitting at home in their lazy boy recliner watching TV.

But for the Christian who's out doing the work of the ministry, for the Christians who's out on the field, you know, being a worker in the kingdom of God, that's the context in which Jesus gave this promise. And Jesus is promising a unique protection, a unique blessing, a character being unstoppable in the work of the gospel. And God promises to at least at times even use miraculous means to protect his people and to make them effective.

Now, have you ever well, the time you do it, you go buy milk at the store and you do what I do, I go and I look at all the milk jugs and I get the latest data I can find. I start looking back behind, you know, two or three jugs back, because if I can get one, you know, with a later freshness, I would, that's fresh and milk and, you know, stay better in the fridge longer and all kinds of things have freshness dates on them. You know, you find you get that box of cereal and you take a look at the best before used, you know, and it says January 21st, you know, 2020.

You think, wow, there's a lot of preservatives in this there. Well, what I'm getting at here, there's no expiration date on this promise. Does anybody see any kind of expiration date on this? You just won't find it.

You're not going to find the expiration date. Look at Acts chapter two, beginning at verse 33. Here's another promise of the Holy Spirit made to the world.

This was made in an evangelistic message. This promise wasn't made only to believers. It was made to the world at large.

It says again, Acts chapter two, look at first at verse 33, then we're going to look at verse 39, verse 33. Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this, which you now see and hear. Peter's thinking in verse 33 is that Jesus received this promise of the Holy Spirit from the father, and now he has poured it out upon his people who were gathered together, the hundred and twenty disciples there gathered together on the day of Pentecost.

And as they were gathered, the Holy Spirit came upon them in a unique way. There was the sound of a mighty rushing wind. There sat upon them what seemed to be tongues of fire sitting above their heads, it was strange phenomenon, and they were also given the gift of tongues at that moment, not to preach a message to the crowd.

You know, that's one of the biggest misunderstandings that people have about the gift of tongues, that the gift of tongues is meant to give you or any believer the ability to communicate to another person in another language, as if I was going to go to Germany and I should pray that God would give me the gift of tongues so that I could just speak German flawlessly, you know, supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. That's not what the gift of tongues is at all. The Bible makes it very clear in First Corinthians, chapter twelve and in First Corinthians, chapter fourteen, that he who speaks in an unknown tongue does not speak to man, but to God.

The gift of tongues is a tool of interpersonal communication between the believer and God on the day of Pentecost, they were not speaking to the crowd in the gift of tongues, they were speaking to God. And the crowd overheard them, by the way, the crowd said that they were declaring the great things of God, they were praising God in these tongues that were unknown to them, but known to God and overheard by many in this diverse crowd on the day of Pentecost. In any regard, when it came time to talk to the crowd, Peter did it in one language that they all understood, and that was Greek.

It was no problem to communicate with the crowd, Peter did it. Anyway, you get the point here. The promise of the Holy Spirit, specifically including miraculous gifts that look at what it says in verse thirty nine about this promise for this promise is to you.

That's the crowd gathered there on the day of Pentecost, right? And to your children, that means to their descendants and to all who are afar off as many as the Lord our God will call. Who's that? That's us. That's everybody.

You get the point here. Is there an expiration date on this promise? No, quite the contrary. This promise that you see fulfilled right in front of you, Peter says this promise is for you.

It's for your children. By the way, children there is used in the context of descendants. It's not like it was good for their children, but not for their grandchildren.

You understand what I mean? It's for you. It's for your descendants and for all who are afar. I don't know how you get any broader than that.

Matter of fact, instead of having an expiration date, it is if Peter was shouting at the top of his lungs, no expiration date. It's for every generation at every place. It seems very clear folks.

Look at one other place here. First Corinthians chapter 14. Actually, why don't you take a look instead of first Corinthians chapter 12, verse seven.

I think this verse expresses the point I'm trying to make here even more clearly. We may take a look at chapter 14 as well, but first Corinthians chapter 12, verse seven says the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. Why does God give these gifts of the Holy Spirit to profit the body of Christ to benefit them, to build them up as well? Look at the same thought repeated in first Corinthians chapter 14.

Let's say verse 26, where it says, how is it then brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Do we agree that supernatural and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned there? Now look at what he says at the end of verse 26. Let all things be done for edification.

In other words, what is the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the miraculous ones? It's for the building up for the edification for the profit of the people of God. It's for their benefit. Now, let me ask you this.

Did the Corinthians or the first century church, did they need to be built up and profited and edified in their church body, but we don't need it today? That's nonsense. The need for spiritual gifts did not die out with the apostles. Therefore, it's very reasonable to assume that the supply of spiritual gifts did not die out with the apostles.

If the purpose of these supernatural gifts is to build up, to edify, to bless, then friends, if that's the purpose, then that purpose is still valid today. The natural consistent testimony of the New Testament is that the miraculous gifts described in the New Testament have not been retracted. And I have to honestly say that I don't believe that anyone with a fresh understanding of the scriptures could ever come to such an understanding.

I just don't know how it could be. I think that just plain natural reading of the scriptures can lead us to that conclusion that the gifts of the Holy Spirit died out with the apostles. There is no indication in the scriptures, none whatsoever, that any one or all of the miraculous gifts would die out when the apostles died out.

Now, there is an indication that there was something specially unique about the ministry of the apostles and the prophets in the first century. And that's a passage taken from Ephesians chapter two, which says that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. That means that the writers of scripture had a foundational work, a foundational inspiration that you don't need to lay again.

We don't need another authoritative apostle like the apostle Paul or Peter to write more books of scripture. That foundation is laid and Ephesians chapter two tells us that. Yet, if you want to say, are there apostles or special emissaries of the Lord? I would call apostles with a little a prophets with a little p. Are there those in the church today? Well, yes, of course.

Again, there's no indication that miraculous gifts would die out when the apostles died out as well, I would say. And I think you may have noticed this when we look through all the different lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is no distinction made between miraculous gifts and other gifts or sign gifts and other gifts.

In other words, Paul doesn't say, OK, it's like the Chinese menu. You know, here's column A and here's column B and you get to pick three from A but no from B. B is no good today. No, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not categorized by the Bible in those ways.

Now, I've seen teachings and worksheets and all these things where they list all the spiritual gifts, you know, or at least all the ones mentioned in the Bible. And there they are. They're all mentioned and they're all categorized teaching gifts, leading gifts, ministry gifts, miraculous gifts or sign gifts.

You know, and they all have the categories. They all have the rows and they say, well, row one is for today. Row two is for today.

Row three is for today. Row four. No, that's out of here.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, on what biblical basis does anyone have for making such rigid categories and saying that this category is no longer for today? Do you understand what I'm making? They're making a distinction that the scriptures themselves do not make. And I would say that there is no more specific scripture. I think what we have is specific enough in front of us.

For me, I find the Acts chapter two passage extremely compelling. But if you wanted something even more specific and say, well, why is why is there no passage where Paul writes? And I want you to know that these gifts will not pass away when I and all the other apostles die. Why? I think it was just a nonissue to them.

You might as well ask the question, where is the scriptural evidence that someone can be saved beyond the time of the apostles? Is there a verse that specifically says that someone can be saved after that? Just of course they can. That's what it's just in the whole tenor. It's all woven throughout the scriptures.

That's why I think we don't have a more specific scriptural example of this again, although I would say that it's hard to get more specific than Peter did on the day of Pentecost when he said this promise is to you, to your descendants and to all who are far off. Well, having said all that, I think we have a very important question in front of us. Then why do some Christians believe that some of the gifts of the spirit have passed away from the church today? I mean, if it's this compelling, if it makes this much sense, then where's the disagreement? Well, I would say that the first mistake that those people make is, first of all, they have a wrong understanding of history.

There are many Christians who believe that history teaches us that the gifts of the Holy Spirit vanished when the apostles died, that you won't find records of miraculous gifts or sign gifts, as they term them, happening after the death of the apostles. And they say, well, you know, we have to explain this somehow. After all, history says they vanished.

Folks, let me just tell you right off, history does not say that they vanished. Let me make this sufficient to say that from all of my historical research, and I've made it as extensive as I could. I am firmly persuaded that if you were to go up to a Christian, an everyday Christian in the year 200, that's two or three generations after the apostles died.

If you were to go up to a normal, everyday Christian in the year 200 and say, wow, I mean, things must really be different now that the gifts of the Holy Spirit passed away when the apostles died. They'd look at you and they'd say, what are you crazy? What are you talking about? You should know that it wasn't well until more around the year 300 that Christians started saying, hmm, maybe they passed away. Nobody was saying that before that time.

Now, secondly. Some Christians believe this because they have a wrong understanding of First Corinthians 13, 8 through 10. I want you to turn to that passage because we need to take a look at this.

First Corinthians chapter 13, verses 8 through 10. This is in the mind of some people, a proof text which says the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today. First Corinthians chapter 13, verse 8. It says love never fails, but where there are prophecies, they will fail where there are tongues.

They will cease where there is knowledge. It will vanish away for we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

And what's Paul's main point in this passage of First Corinthians 13? The main message of the passage is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are appropriate for the present time, but they're not permanent. In eternity, in heaven, you won't need the gift of prophecy in the age to come. You won't need these supernatural gifts.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are gifts given for an imperfect time. When the perfect has come, they won't be needed anymore. Now notice it exactly in verse 10, where Paul says, when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

There are Bible teachers who grab a hold of that verse and say that based on that, the certain gifts of the Holy Spirit, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today. They say in verse 10, that which is in

part means the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. I scratch my head at that one.

I don't know where it says that. But secondly, they say, verse 10, that which is perfect, they say, refers to, again in the minds of some, the most commonly heard explanation I hear from this camp within the Christian circle is that that which is perfect refers to the completion of the New Testament. And so once the New Testament was complete, you didn't need these miraculous gifts anymore.

And they passed from the scene. Well, I have to say that virtually all commentators agree that that which is perfect is when we are in the eternal presence of the perfect one. It's eternity.

I don't see any scriptural basis whatsoever for saying that it refers to the completion of the New Testament. I could quote the many, many passages in the New Testament where this same ancient Greek word for perfect is used for exact reference for the eternal state or the coming of Jesus. And so some people say that here's another argument that some people bring out.

It's based on verse eight. Look at verse eight, where it says love never fails, but whether there are prophecies, they will fail. Whether there are tongues, they will cease.

Whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. Many who believe that the miraculous gifts ended with the apostles claim that this says that the miraculous gifts will pass away. Specifically, they say the gift of tongues, because notice verse eight, again, prophecies, he says they will fail tongues.

They will cease knowledge. It will vanish away. The explanation that they give goes something like this.

The verb translated tongues will cease. They say that the ancient Greek grammar of that verb, they call it the it's in the middle voice, not in the passive. They say that this could be translated.

Tongues will stop by themselves. But friends, let me lay this out to you. That analysis may sound scholarly, but it's disregarded by virtually every scholar of the ancient Greek language.

Matter of fact, I can't name for you a single Greek scholar who supports the idea that first Corinthians, chapter 13, verse eight, says that tongues will vanish from the scene after the apostles are dead. But I want you to know that even if that translation is correct, it does nothing to suggest when tongues will cease, even if it does mean that tongues will cease all on their own. Does it say when is there an expiration date on there? Does it say tongues will cease when the last apostle dies? Does it say tongues will cease all by themselves when the New Testament written tongues will cease all on their own? No, it's just not there at all.

But the bottom line is, this is that this passage does not tell us that tongues will stop by themselves. Well, well, then what does Paul mean there in verse eight? Well, friends, sometimes you can make something out of nothing in biblical analysis. Look at it again.

Whether there are prophecies, they will fail. Whether there are tongues, they will cease. Whether there are knowledge, they will vanish away.

What is Paul saying? Paul is just saying that these gifts won't last forever. And when the perfect has come, the return of Jesus Christ, they will vanish away. Paul's whole big point in first Corinthians 13, because these things are destined to pass away.

Why don't you keep your real focus on that which is going to last even into eternity? And that's love. That's what the chapter is all about. Don't let your interest in the gifts overpass or Lord over your passion for a love among God's people.

That's the whole lesson of first Corinthians 13. Well, then why does Paul say we'll fail? We'll cease. We'll vanish.

You want to know why? Because underneath the inspiration of Holy Spirit, he was a good writer. Good writers don't say the same thing in the same words three times in a row. They use slightly different words to describe the exact same idea because it's good writing.

Paul means the same thing when he says we'll fail, we'll cease, we'll vanish. He's using slightly different words to describe exactly the same idea. So some people misunderstand what Paul writes here in first Corinthians 13 and they take it as meaning that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or at least some of them are destined to pass away.

And let me show you one other reason why some people believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today. And that's found in Hebrews chapter two, verses one through four. This is a common misunderstanding.

Hebrews chapter two, verses one through four, we read. Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. Now, do you see what it says about signs and wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit about those things in this passage? What it says about them is that those things attest to the divine origin of the message of Jesus. In other words, one of the reasons you know that Jesus really did bring a message from God was that it was witnessed to by signs and wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the thinking behind this, the misunderstanding behind this is to say, oh, miracles, signs, wonders, gifts of the Holy Spirit. The reason why God gave these to the church was to authenticate the scriptures. Well, friends, once the scriptures are authenticated, you don't need signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit anymore.

Do you see how that logic works? So again, the idea is in their thinking, and I think it's erroneous thinking that the only real reason miracles and gifts were given was to authenticate revelation, and there's no longer a need for that. This is the way many people explain along those lines. They say, if you look at the Bible, you find three main times when revelation was given, when scripture was written, so to speak.

You have during the time of Moses, you have during the times of Elijah and Elisha, and you have during the times of Jesus and the apostles. And they say, isn't it interesting that during those three times when a lot of scripture was written that you have so many examples of miraculous works in the days of Moses, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, the prophets, and in the days of Jesus and the first century church? Well, friends, if miracles only happened around certain times of revelation, then there's a substantial amount of

revelation that's then accounted for by miracles. Scripture was being written all the way from the time of Joshua to the time of Solomon.

And you know what? You do not have a spectacular record of the miraculous all within that time. Not that miracles didn't happen. They're just not recorded in scripture.

You see the point? The point is simply this. We cannot think that the main reason or the primary reason why miracles and signs and wonders and spiritual gifts are given is to authenticate revelation. Matter of fact, I would say that if miracles do authenticate revelation, we're in trouble.

Because false prophets can and do perform authenticating miracles. Remember that in the days of Moses, when Moses came before Pharaoh and God said, listen, you know, when Pharaoh doubts you, I'd tell you what to do. Throw that staff of yours on the ground and it'll become a snake.

And then if he doesn't believe that, touch your staff to the water and the water will become blood. Man, Pharaoh believed that. So Moses did it.

What did Pharaoh's magicians do? They did the same thing. Isn't that scary? How about this? In Deuteronomy chapter 13, verses one through three, it says this. If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and he gives you a sign or a wonder and the sign or the wonder comes to pass of which he spoke to you saying, let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them.

You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams, because the Lord your God has not spoken to him. What's the test there? Is it signs and wonders? No, it's his faithfulness to the word of God. How about this? The Bible says in second Corinthians chapter two, verse nine, that when the Antichrist comes to power, he'll come to power according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders.

If signs and wonders authenticate revelation, if they prove that revelation is really from God, then you're ready to accept the Antichrist because he's going to have signs and wonders behind what he does. Friends, let me put it to you this way. The primary purpose of miracles, especially as they are seen in the New Testament, was not to authenticate God's messengers, though that is a secondary purpose.

I'm not saying that that was not a purpose at all. I'm just not saying it was the primary purpose. The primary purpose of miracles was to humbly meet the needs of people.

You know, when you think about it, the miracles that Jesus did were a great disappointment to the Jewish people of his day. Oh, they wanted to see miracles. All right.

They wanted to see a miracle of calling down fire from heaven upon a Roman legion. That's the miracle they were looking for. They were looking for real miracles that would be ones of power and glory.

They thought virtually Jesus wasted his miracles on healing blind people and lame people. Come on, Jesus. There's real political problems here.

Once you use your miracles to fix that. But Jesus used those miracles to humbly meet the needs. And by the way, did the people of Jesus's own day believe the signs which he performed? No.

If miracles are given to authenticate revelation, they failed in the ministry of Jesus. That is not their primary purpose. Well, then what about Hebrews chapter two, where it says that these were attested to? Well, yes,

yes, they certainly have a role in that, but it's a secondary role, not a primary role.

I think we can say confidently from first Corinthians chapter 12 and 14 that the purpose of the gifts of the spirit is not primarily to authenticate God's messengers. The purpose primarily is to edify and to build up God's people. And that need lives today.

Well, let me give one final reason, and this is a quick one. I think people are mixed up about this because they make a wrong application of the truth that various imitation or counterfeit miracles have demonic counterparts. In other words, I've heard people teach like this and say, well, you know, speaking in tongues isn't of God.

Look, certain occultic sects, they have speaking in tongues or something like it. Among certain Buddhists, they have speaking in tongues or something like it. See, it's not of God.

Well, folks, it is certainly true that in certain cults and occultic groups, you have things which seem or imitate the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I would just ask you this. Does the existence of a counterfeit prove that there's a genuine out there? Or does the existence of a counterfeit deny that there's a genuine out there? In other words, nobody's making counterfeits of monopoly money, folks.

But they will make counterfeits of hundred dollar bills. Why? Because there are genuine one hundred dollar bills and currency. That's why they're counterfeited.

The fact that the gifts are sometimes faked or counterfeited or show up in occultic or other groups, it does not argue against the true existence of the gifts one bit. So, folks, I think that those who believe that the gifts of the spirit have passed away may be sincere, but they're sincerely wrong. Now, you might say, David, what's the big deal about this? You know, is this the modern day equivalent of, you know, how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? And are Christians going to divide over this? Well, first of all, I would not divide with any brother over this issue.

I have friends and pastors in this community who believe that the gifts of the spirit or at least the miraculous ones, they died with the apostles. And I count those men as brothers and friends and co-laborers in Christ. It's not a matter to divide over.

Friends, as I started out with, I see no more urgent need in the church today. And for an openness and an outpouring to the fullness of the work of the spirit of God. I'm not just talking about miraculous gifts, I'm talking about a matter of fact, I'll come right out and say this.

I think sometimes Christians focus too much on the miraculous gifts of the spirit. And not enough on the life transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, friends, we believe that the gift of tongues is for today and that the gift of healing is for today and that the gift of prophecy is for today.

These things touch my life with regularity. Ladies and gentlemen, what I have a passion to see is I want to see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that radically transforms people and churches and communities. That's what I want to see.

And I believe that part of that means an openness and a biblical understanding to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in general. But let me leave you with this. Some people, perhaps you tonight, you know the truth about the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know it. You may be part of the Amen corner here this evening. Amen.

Preach it. Yeah. Well, I don't know how people believe anything different.

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's great. But I want to know, are you keeping this as theoretical knowledge and not life knowledge? Do the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit have operation in your life? Or you may have all your facts in order in your head and you can out debate anybody.

You know it all in that regard. Well, God bless you for all that knowledge. Is it in your life? Maybe you're plugging up the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Maybe there is no real operation of the gifts or the power of the Holy Spirit in your life because there's sin and compromise in your life that you won't get out. And the Holy Spirit won't be poured out upon you until you get right with God in those areas. You see, I'm not just asking you to have your head on straight about this, I want your life to be on straight.

You know how somebody can be a practical atheist? Oh, they believe in their head that there's a God in heaven, but they live their life as if there were no God. There's a lot of people like that, right? You would ask him, would you believe in God? Oh, yeah, yeah, there's God up there. But the way that they live their life.

You would say, well, there must not be a God. Well, there are some people who, as a practical matter, believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit died with the apostles because you never see any evidence of the gifts or the power of the Holy Spirit in their life. And friends, it doesn't matter if the Holy Spirit takes it away from you, excuse me, if the devil takes it away from you by teaching you that they're not for today, or if the devil takes them away from you by just getting you to neglect and ignore the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit.

If it's not in your life, it's not in your life. It's very important to know both the truth of the Holy Spirit, according to his word, but it's very important to know the experience of the Holy Spirit. My closing question for you is what do you know of the Holy Spirit by experience? And let me ask it one other way.

In your recent past, last week, last two weeks, last month, in the recent past, what do you know of the Holy Spirit by experience? He wants to be a part of your life every day in his gifts and his power. Well, Father, I pray that you would seal that message on hearts. I pray, God, that you would send that last idea home ringing in the ears of all of us here.

You know, Lord, it is important that we have our facts straight about what your word teaches on this, but Lord God, oh, how we need to know your Holy Spirit by experience and not just by ideas in our head. Lord, I pray that you would prevail with us, that you would move upon us to prevail with you and seek you diligently about these things. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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