

# Years That the Locusts Have Eaten

by G.W. North

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*God's design is for spiritual gifts to be received at regeneration or shortly after, and neglecting them leads to a loss of spiritual usefulness and development.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Spiritual Gifts"

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## Description

G.W. North emphasizes the unfortunate reality that many believers do not receive or operate in their spiritual gifts until much later after their baptism in the Holy Spirit. He argues that this delay hinders their spiritual growth and the fulfillment of God's design for them, which is to receive these gifts early in their faith journey. North highlights that the New Testament presents a picture of a Spirit-filled Church, rich in gifts and power, and laments the loss of spiritual usefulness and understanding that comes from neglecting these gifts. He stresses that the gifts of the Spirit are not in conflict with holiness but are essential for the church's growth and the believer's maturity. Ultimately, he calls for a recognition of the importance of spiritual gifts in building up the church and fulfilling God's purpose.

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## Transcript

It is a regrettable fact that some people do not appear to receive or function in spiritual gifts until a long time after they are baptised in the Holy Spirit. This condition may be thought to have much to recommend it, because it allows time for development and maturity in other important areas of spiritual life. However, it is really a great pity, for had these dear people but known or been desirous of it, God's design was that they should have received the gifts at the time of regeneration, or at least very shortly after. There can be little doubt that such is God's intention, for although nowhere in their writings do the New Testament authors actually say that this is so, it is the plainly revealed scriptural pattern, beside which it is also most commendable, both to reason and observation. The truth is that God gives gifts unto babes.

However, the New Testament writers, except in a few notable verses, speak rather more of receiving the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit than about receiving the gifts of the Spirit. They refer to the gifts as they ought, but evidently have them in true perspective. As a whole the New Testament scriptures reveal a Church baptised in the Holy Spirit, emerging from the death and resurrection of Christ, full of faith, overflowing with love, perfecting (their) holiness, replete with spiritual gifts, moving in power under the anointing of Christ their Head, complete in Him.

It is a distinct pity that so many dear brethren, of varying degrees of spiritual growth and stature, either do not receive and function in any spiritual gifts at all, or receive them very late in life. Worse still, it amounts to a shame that, with so many, this happens after years of complete indifference to them. This being so, a whole glorious realm of further spiritual usefulness and fuller development has been lost to them.

It is so sad and so altogether needless that such a state should be; indeed it is tragic, even paradoxical. However great may have been their holiness of life, love of truth and zeal for Christ throughout the years, these people have nevertheless forfeited what God has provided for them. By this willing ignorance or deliberate unbelief they have lost so much that ought to have been theirs. Without exception all who have done this have withdrawn from and irretrievably lost vast realms of understanding, power and usefulness to God and man.

This has all been because of such needless neglect on their part, for contrary to what they may have believed, he who has gifts does not thereby forfeit holiness. The gifts are instruments of applied love, and by them a man gains opportunity to perfect holiness to a fuller degree in wider realms of responsibility, as Paul points out in the second epistle he wrote to the Corinthians. Perhaps even more pitiable than the loss in functional usefulness, is the fact that all such have lost the opportunity, given only in this life, of helping to build up a local church in the way intended by God, and revealed to us by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles and by Paul in his epistles.

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