

Early Church Evidence the Gifts Continued

by Marc Carrier

This sermon delves into the debate on whether the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased, examining biblical arguments and early church teachings. It emphasizes the continuation of miraculous works, healing, prophecy, and deliverance in the early church, highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit's power in demonstrating the validity of the gospel message. The sermon also addresses the misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 13 regarding the cessation of gifts, pointing to the early church's belief that the gifts are necessary until there are no longer unbelievers, signaling the advent of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Luke 4:1, Mark 16:15, John 14:12, 1 Corinthians 13:8

Topics: "Gifts of the Holy Spirit", "Continuation of Miraculous Works"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning. Today, we're going to be talking about whether or not the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. We're going to look a little in the scriptures and we're going to look at the early church, which is really where the real proof is, because if the gifts ceased after the death of the apostles, you would no longer see the gifts in play.

And so we're going to look at the biblical argument, which really is a non-argument. There's no reason why they would have ceased. And we're also going to look at the early church quotes concerning the particular subject, okay? So first of all, I want to talk a little about Jesus.

When he came on in his public ministry, after he was baptized by John, we read in Luke chapter 4 that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, being led by the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit was upon him in chapter 4, verse 1, verse 14, and as well as verse 18, you'll see. And then he went around healing the sick, preaching the kingdom, and casting out demons. And he did many miracles, and that's indisputed.

And then we also see when Jesus sent the disciples out, first the 12 in Luke chapter 9, and then the 70 in Luke chapter 10, we see that they also went out preaching the kingdom, healing the sick, and casting out demons. And then we see at the end of his public ministry, after his resurrection, he told the disciples that they would go out and do this work as well. So we're going to read Mark chapter 16, starting in verse 15.

And he said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved. He who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

These signs will accompany those who have believed. In my name they will cast out demons. They will speak with new tongues.

They will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. And we also see before Jesus was crucified in John chapter 14, verse 12.

He said, truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also even greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father. You know, we read in the the discourse that Jesus had the night before he was betrayed in John chapter 14 through 17, that Jesus told them that it is better that he goes to the Father, because if he goes, then he will send the comforter, and he will teach them all things. And we also see at the end of Luke that Jesus told them that he would send forth the promise of my Father upon you, but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Okay, and so that's Luke chapter 24, verse 49. And then, of course, that's what happened. Pentecost happened, and then everybody was filled with the Holy Spirit.

They were speaking in tongues. They were prophesying. That is in Acts chapter 2. And what did Peter reference when this event happened? He read a passage from the book of Joel, and this was an end time passage which talked about many things that we saw about the gifts, but it also referenced things that were specific to the end times, signs and wonders in the sky, things that are referenced in Matthew chapter 24 that are end time discourse.

And so my question to you, first of all, would be if the prophetic fulfillment of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a reference to the end times, and not all those things have been fulfilled, why would we believe that those events were for a distinct time in history that have already occurred, that's already occurred, but had stopped when we are closer to the end times now than they were at that time? Okay, it really doesn't make any logical sense that the gifts would have ceased. And then when the people were actually saved, they were baptized, and we'll read in Acts chapter 2, and starting in verse 38, Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you'll receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now, the next verse is the important one.

For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself. Okay, so we read at the end of the Gospel of Mark where these signs will accompany those who believe, which doesn't have a time limit on it. It's talking about subsequent generations of disciples.

And then here we're talking about this promise, this gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised for them while they wait in the city that they would be clothed with power from on high. And then when the fulfillment of Joel, the partial fulfillment of Joel occurred at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and he is telling them that this promise is for you and subsequent generations. It's not something that was supposed to stop.

Okay, and so, and then we see that they continued the work, and it wasn't just the 12 apostles. Paul is not one of the 12 apostles. Okay, Philip is not one of the 12 apostles.

And these guys were doing, Stephen was not one of the 12 apostles, and they were doing the signs and wonders. They were healing people. They were delivering people.

They were doing that work as well, and they were not the 12 apostles. They weren't, you know, and neither were the 70 that were sent two by two. Okay, so this work continued.

The power of the Holy Spirit continued. But it didn't end there, and that's the important point I want to make here, because some people say that, okay, well, you know, it stopped in the scriptures, and then we don't see that the gifts of the Holy Spirit remained active in the early church, and which is completely not true, because many people who subscribe to the Antonicene teachings, they subscribe to, and Antonicene means pre the Council of Nicaea, so 325 AD. People in general recognize that the church went through some significant changes, okay, in the early 4th century or the late 3rd century, so the late, the mid to late 200s to the 300s, and the church went through some radical changes.

And really, I would sum it up as institutionalization and the combining of the two kingdoms, the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. And so church and state became one, okay? Not completely, but that is when the genesis began of the change of the church, okay? And so, and you would call it, you know, turning into the Catholic church over time, and then ultimately, it was a split between the church in the east and the church in the west, so we have the Eastern Orthodox church as well. So, but it was the institutionalization of the church that it was more based on structure.

They had buildings, they had a hierarchical clergy structure, as opposed to they're being just believers with leaders that were not leaders in the sense that we have today, but rather they were serving the capacity in which they were gifting, they're gifted. Okay, that was a major shift that changed from the, what I'll say, the apostolic church, which is the Church of Acts, and the early Antonicene church, and then the late Antonicene church, okay? There was a shift occurring, and it was really a compromise, okay? And I'm not going to get into why those things happened, but what happened is the church changed, okay? And everyone in the kingdom community will recognize that that change occurred, okay? When I say kingdom community, people that subscribe to the early church teachings and literal obedience to Christ, okay? And because that change occurred, at the same time as something else happened, the gifts of the spirit started to diminish. And I don't think that's coincidence, but some people who subscribe to the Antonicene writings as being useful, and edifying, and encouraging for us to understand early church practice and doctrine, they failed to recognize that the same change that they didn't like, which was the combining of the two kingdoms and the institutionalization of the church, was concurrent with the reduction in the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit being evident in the church.

And they don't see the link in that compromise, and I believe that is a direct link, and that's documented in the early church writings. So I want to read several passages from the early church, and because they're really edifying to me, and they're encouraging to me, to be able to see that the change had occurred not when the apostles died, and not just because they assembled the canon of scripture, was literally putting a binding, literally, they bound the letters that were written to the churches, you know, at some point in history, and people believe that, oh, because they put a binding on these letters that already existed for, you know, centuries, that all of a sudden the gifts would cease, which is a joke. It makes no sense whatsoever.

Okay, so I want to read a very inspirational passage that I enjoy, one of my favorites, in the Antonine writings. Even as things are, if your thought is to spend this period of existence in enjoyments, how are you so ungrateful as to consider it insufficient as not, thankfully, to recognize the many and exquisite pleasures God has bestowed upon you? For what is more delightful than to have God the Father and our Lord at peace with us, than revelation of the truth, than confession of our errors, than pardon of the innumerable sins of our past life? What greater pleasure than distaste of pleasure itself, contempt of all that the world offers, true liberty of pure conscience, a contented life and freedom from all fear of death? This is nobler than to tread underfoot the gods of the nations, to expel evil spirits, to perform healings, to seek divine revelations, to live to God. These are the pleasures.

These are the entertainments worthy of Christian men, holy, everlasting, free. Consider these as your circus games. Fix your eyes on the courses of this world.

The changing seasons reckon up the periods of time. Long for the goal of the final consummation. Defend the assemblies of the churches.

Be startled at God's signal. Be roused up at the angel's trumpet. Glory in the hands of martyrdom.

Tertullian. And I'm going to list the actual citations in the notes. And so you can read these in the actual Antonine Scene Fathers, but this was 187 AD estimated.

And he talks about the things that they found enjoyable. You know, that are more pleasurable than the pleasures of life. And expelling evil spirits, to tread underfoot the gods of the nations, to perform healings, to seek divine revelations, to live to God.

These are the noble things that were occurring at 200 AD about. Okay? And so things did not change. That looks like the Book of Acts to me.

And that's what was still going on in parts of the world. And so I'm going to read another one from 180 AD from Irenaeus, who is a disciple of a disciple. So he is like a third generation from the Apostle John.

Okay. So those who are truly his disciples receiving grace from him perform miraculous works in his name. In order to promote the welfare of others according to the gift that each one has received from him, some truly and certainly cast out devils.

The result is that those who have been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe and join themselves to the church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come. They see visions and they utter prophetic expressions.

Still others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them and the sick are made whole. What is more? As I have said, even the dead have been raised up and remained among us for many years. What more can I say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the church throughout the whole world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, in which she exerts, that is the church exerts day by day for the benefit of the Gentiles, neither practicing deception upon any nor taking any reward from them.

For just as she, the church, has received without charge from God, so does she minister without charge. Nor does she perform anything by means of angelic invocations and incantations or any other wicked curious heart calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. She has worked miracles for the benefit of

mankind and not to lead them into error.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ even now confers benefits. It cures thoroughly and effectively all who everywhere believe on him. Amen.

I mean this is 180 AD. So this is nearly about the same time as Tertullian was writing and he says that people are still raising the dead, okay? So we're talking the book of Acts continued here for hundreds of years. Now Origen talks about a diminishing or a reduction in his time.

So we're talking 248 AD estimated. And he says, and there are still preserved among Christians traces of the Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits and perform many cures and foresee certain events according to the will of the Logos.

Okay, so according to the will of Christ, we are still seeing traces of the Holy Spirit. They're doing deliverance, they're healing people, and they're also prophesying. And he's saying, but but he is saying that there has been a reduction.

Okay, and so and he goes on to say, for they the Jews have no longer prophets nor miracles, traces of which to a considerable extent are still found among Christians, and some of them more remarkable than any that existed among the Jews. And these we ourselves have witnessed if our testimony may be received. So he's saying that he's still witnessing these things, that there's still prophecy among among the people.

Okay in his time, and that's about 250 AD. We can clearly show a countless multitudes of Greeks and barbarians who acknowledge the existence of Jesus and some give evidence of their having received through this faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform revoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things and of Jesus along with the mention of his history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities and from distractions of mind and madness and countless other ills which could be cured neither by men nor devils.

And so we're going to read another one talking about the diminishing. And this one specifically speaks as to why it was diminishing. And this is the point that I think a lot of the people who subscribe to the Antonicine teachings, they overlook it.

Okay, moreover the Holy Spirit gave signs of his presence at the beginning of Christ's ministry. And after his ascension he gave still more. But since that time these signs have diminished.

Okay, so he acknowledges they've diminished. Although there are still traces of his presence in a few who have had their souls purified by the gospel and their actions regulated by its influence. For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit and remove from thoughts that are without understanding.

So what is he saying here? He's saying the people have changed. The church has changed because the Holy Spirit is still active and doing work. So there's traces of his presence here at 250 AD.

In the people that have regulated their actions for its influence, they purified their souls and that do not have deceit. Okay, and that have understanding. And so what he is saying is the people that are personally consecrated and that were not compromised by the change of the church are still walking in the power and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

So the biggest argument that things have ceased biblically, which holds no merit whatsoever, it's based on 1 Corinthians chapter 13 saying that that love will prevail and that the gifts would cease. And it's specific about certain attributes or things that the Holy Spirit imparts and it's speaking primarily talking about love. And it says in chapter 13 verse 8, love never fails, but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away.

If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

But now faith, hope, love. Abide these three, but the greatest of these is love. Okay, so it talks about how knowledge will be done away and it talks about how tongues will be done away.

It talks about that love will not fail and prophecy will be done away, okay, at a certain time. And but it doesn't really give you clarity as to when this event will occur. I already gave you points that that why would it end? In fact, there's an early church writing that I that I may have here and that that says that the things won't end that the gifts are necessary as long as there are unsaved people.

Okay, because the gifts are to demonstrate the validity of the message, okay? So of course they haven't gone away, but here it says that we see in part but then we will see face to face. Are you going to see the canon face to face? Are you going to see a person? And perfection coming, is it a book? And if it is the book, is it the canon of the early church? Or is it the canon of today? Okay, because we have deuterocanonical books, which means the second canon and then we have the primary canon which makes up our 66 books. Okay, so the question is what is perfection? And well, the early church, they discuss this and so I'm actually going to read that passage.

Archelos said, these sayings which are put forth by the blessed Paul were not uttered without the direction of God and therefore it is certain that what he has declared to us is that we are to look for our Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect one. Hello, perfection, who is the only one that knows the Father, with the sole exception of him to whom he has chosen also to reveal him as I am able to demonstrate from his own words. But let it be observed that it is said that when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away.

For in that first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul speaks in the following terms of the perfection that is to come. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.

Whether there be knowledge, it shall be destroyed. For we know in part, we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect, that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Observe now what virtue that which is perfect possesses in itself and of what order that perfection is, but not thus inconsiderable, not thus obscure and ignoble, will be the manner of the advent of him who is the truly perfect one.

That is to say our Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, but as a king when he draws near to his city does first of all send on before him his life guardsmen, he in signs and standards and banners his generals and chiefs and prefects and then forthwith all objects aroused and excited in different fashions while some become

inspired with terror and others with exultation at the prospect of the king's advent. So also my Lord Jesus Christ who is the truly perfect one at his coming will first send on before him his glory and the consecrated heralds of an unstained and untainted kingdom and then the universal creation will be moved and perturbed uttering prayers and supplications until he delivers it from its bondage and it must needs be that the race of man shall then be in fear and vehement agitation on account of the many offenses it has committed.

Then the righteous one will rejoice and as they look for the things which have been promised then and the subsistence of the affairs of this world will no longer be maintained but all things shall be destroyed and whether they be prophecies or the books of prophets they shall fail whether they be the tongues of the whole race they shall cease for men will no longer need to feel anxiety or to think solicitously about those things which are necessary for life Whether it be knowledge by what teachers so ever it be possessed It shall also be destroyed for none of these things will be able to endure the advent of the mighty king For just as a little spark if taken and put up against the splendor of the sun At once perishes from the view. So the whole creation all prophecy all knowledge all tongues As we have said above shall be destroyed that writing was written approximately 320 AD It's the disputation of Archelaus and maine's i'm not sure if i'm pronouncing that right Uh, but it's giving you an early church perspective on what the first corinthians passage actually references If you read it common sense tells you you're not going to see a book face to face It's certainly not talking about the death of the apostles It's talking about those things ceasing at the advent of jesus christ his second coming To me, it's obvious just reading the passage but upon reading the early church's perspective on it It really helps to understand that these things didn't cease with the death of the apostles for the prophetic gifts Remain with us even to the present time and hence you ought to understand that the gifts formerly among your nation The jews have been transferred to us the christians. This is justin martyr 160 ad and i'm going to read another one Wherefore let none of you exalt himself against his brother Though he be a prophet or though he be a worker of miracles For it happens that there be no longer an unbeliever All the power of signs will thenceforth be superfluous.

This is the one I was talking about This is in the apostolic constitutions. So it was compiled around 390 ad So it was written prior to that and it just gives you an understanding Regardless of your view on the apostolic constitutions It gives you a keen understanding of what the church believed and they believe that as long as there are Unbelievers the gifts are necessary and when there is a day that there is no longer an unbeliever Then the gifts are unnecessary And what is that time the advent of jesus christ? He is going to That to draw the line right there unbeliever believer those who had their chance they rejected And those who have accepted and That is when those gifts are no longer going to be necessary and until then we need the gifts We need the power it demonstrates the validity of the teachings it demonstrates it validates christ I mean, it's the reason we believe in christ is that he rose from the dead yet You know, we're not to walk in wise and persuasive words But we're to walk in the demonstration of the spirit and power and that's specifically what the bible says Praise the lord. I thank you for listening to this, please subscribe share and like Uh so that we can spread these teachings and try to get more people to this channel.

Appreciate it. God bless you

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