

# The Gifts of the Spirit

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the transformative nature of the New Covenant, focusing on inner holiness and the empowerment of believers through the Holy Spirit for ministry.*

**Duration:** 58:30

**Scripture:** Hebrews 8:8-9

**Topics:** "Gifts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the New Covenant as introduced in the opening chapters of Matthew. He compares the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 to the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, highlighting the emphasis on the inner life. The speaker laments that many Christians do not seem as excited about the Sermon on the Mount, suggesting that the devil has blinded them to see it as a burden rather than a description of a healthy life. He urges Christians to pay attention to the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, such as freedom from anger, lust, love of money, and seeking the honor of men. The speaker also discusses the ministry of Jesus and how it is different from the ministry in the Old Covenant. He explains that in the New Covenant, ministry is about building up the body and giving life to people, with every believer being called to bring rivers of living water to others. The speaker concludes by stating that the New Covenant ministry is far superior to the Old Covenant.

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## Transcript

So we've come to study number nine in the New Covenant. And we've been looking at how the New Covenant is introduced in the opening chapters of Matthew in many, many ways. We saw that Jesus placed the emphasis on the inner life.

Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is, we can say, the New Covenant equivalent of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. The Israelites were proud of the Ten Commandments. They held it up as the law.

But I don't find Christians so excited about the Sermon on the Mount. That's one indication of how the devil has blinded Christians to think that this was a burden that God was placing on people. We can say that Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is the description of a healthy life.

You know, if a doctor gave a description of a healthy person whose eyes and hands and legs and ears, everything is healthy, that's the Sermon on the Mount. And you've got to be foolish to think that health is a

burden. Sickness is a burden.

Sin is a burden. Holiness is never a burden. And if the devil has succeeded in making a lot of Christians think that holiness is a burden, that's why they're afraid of it.

They'd rather go to a church where sin is tolerated. It's like getting admitted in a hospital which keeps you sick. Can you imagine anything more crazy than that? And avoiding a hospital that guarantees perfect health.

This is the situation of Christendom. We can say that's madness, but that's the madness the devil has put upon a lot of Christians. So, we looked at Matthew 5, 6 and 7 as the inner life.

Everything which was external in the Old Testament is inward. They had an external temple there, here the temple is inside. The sacrifices are external, now it's inside.

It was external sin that was important in the Old Testament series, now it's inward, hidden sin that's serious. So, once we understand that, and also that our ministry must come out of our life. You see, in the Old Testament, Samuel could start prophesying when, I don't know when he started prophesying, 10 years old? How much does a 10 year old know that the Spirit of God was upon him? It says that Jeremiah was a very young man when he started prophesying.

But in the New Testament, when the Son of God came, he couldn't start prophesying when he was 10. He knew the Bible when he was 12, but he wasn't ready to prophesy. He had to spend 30 years.

What for? If Samuel could prophesy when he was 10 and Jeremiah could prophesy when he was 20, why did Jesus have to wait until he was 30? Because he was introducing the New Covenant. And in the New Covenant, everything we speak must come out of our life. How many hours did Jesus take to prepare the Sermon on the Mount? 30 years.

Every sermon Jesus preached, He took 30 years to prepare. That is New Covenant ministry. It's not something you sit down and study books and listen to tapes and prepare a message.

This is how 99.9% of preachers preach today. But in Jesus' case, everything He spoke came out of His life and that is New Covenant ministry. Rivers of living water.

You don't pump a river. It just flows. That's how Jesus' ministry was.

And when you really enter into New Covenant ministry, if you have a life to back it up, it flows. When a person doesn't have a life to back it up, then he's got to sit down and say something that will amuse people or interest people or something that will tickle their ears so that he can collect money from them. Most of what I hear today in Christendom is Old Covenant ministry.

Preaching Old Covenant truths. And they get their verses from the Old Testament because the vast majority of today's preachers, I'd say more than 95% of them, don't have a clue. They don't have a clue about what New Covenant is.

If they did, they'd be preaching holiness. They'd be preaching freedom from anger and lust and freedom from the love of money and freedom from seeking the honor of men. And many, many other things that Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount.

But you hardly ever hear a message on that. I think even if you hear 5% of preachers preach that, you'd be lucky. I think it's about 1%.

So, I'm just trying to stress how the devil has succeeded so much. Imagine if the devil succeeds in blinding 99% of God's army. And only 1% have got their eyes open.

Imagine what a burden it is for that 1% to carry on a battle. Because the other 99% don't have a clue what they're supposed to fight. So, now we come to chapter 8. In chapter 8, 9 and 10 and so on, we see ministry.

Now, Jesus is exercising a ministry. And for that, He was anointed and had the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. And that is how God endorsed Jesus' ministry.

Now, when Jesus told us to follow Him, He didn't tell us to follow Him in His ministry. It's important to know that. When He said, follow Me, He said, take up the cross and follow Me.

He wasn't talking about doing all the things that He did in His ministry. But doing all the things that He did in His life. When He said in John 14, 12, the works that I do, shall you do also.

He's talking about His life and not His ministry. He said in John 14, 12, that every single person who believes in Him, every person who believes in Him, can do the works that He did. What does that mean? Does that mean every believer is going to walk on water? Have you seen one person walk on water? Does it mean that every believer is going to feed the 5,000 with 5 loaves of fish? Have you seen even one believer do it? We shouldn't be unrealistic and get a skip over these verses without understanding what they mean.

It means that we will do the works that Jesus did in His life. Works of obedience. Works of denying His own will.

Works of doing the will of the Father 100%. Then we say, why can't we follow Him in His ministry? Because Jesus was the total body of Christ. The first body of Christ.

Whereas each of us are only one member in that body of Christ. Can a little finger do what the whole body does? No. A little finger can't see.

It can't hear. It can't talk. It can't do what the liver does.

It can't do what the heart does. It can't do what the stomach does. There are a thousand things this little finger can't do.

But it is a member of the body. So it's a crazy thing when preachers tell you, you can do everything that Jesus did. It's like telling the little finger, you can see, you can hear, you can digest food.

The stupidity of thousands of believers to believe that. It's because they don't read the Bible. We are living in a time of tremendous spiritual ignorance.

Because people know more about the movies than they know about the Bible. They know more about television than the Bible. But let me instruct you.

Jesus was the total body of Christ. You could look at Jesus, he was the body of Christ. Today, you cannot look at any human being and say, there is the body of Christ.

Even the apostle Paul, with all his gifts, was one person in the body of Christ. You think Paul could teach anybody how to bring up children? Tell me. Have you ever noticed why in the Bible Paul says, only one sentence on bringing up children.

Fathers, bring up your children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord. Why does he say only that? Because he knew his boundaries. Do you think Paul could teach husbands how to live in an understanding way with their wives? No.

He knew his boundaries. Other members of the body of Christ have to do that, which Paul could not do, because Paul was not a married man. So Paul had his limitations too.

There were a number of things he did. So what I am trying to say is, no human being in the history of the church in 2000 years has been anything more than one member of the body of Christ. So, we can do only a small part of what Jesus did in his ministry.

But this little finger can have the same life that flows all over this body. The same blood, the same life, the same power, that it can have. And so that's why the church is called the body of Christ.

You can have the same life and power in your life that Jesus had, but when it comes to ministry, you can have only that particular ministry that God has called you to. And every member in the body of Christ has a ministry. For 68 years, I heard that the doctor said that there is one part of the body which has no function, and that's the appendix.

And I always said, the humble doctor will say, we don't know the function. The proud doctor will say, there is no function. But just last week in the papers I read, the doctors have discovered the function of the appendix.

I wasn't a doctor, but I always said that. For more than 40 years I said it, because I believe the Bible. I believe that God never created anything in this body without a function.

And I want to say to you, if you're a part of the body of Christ, every single person in the body of Christ has a function. I mean, you may be ignorant of the function. That's another thing.

Or you may be too lazy to find out what your gift is. That's another thing. But every person is called by God to fulfill a function.

A hand can be paralyzed. And many Christians are paralyzed. So we see Jesus ministering here.

He comes to a leper. And it says here, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. And he healed him.

The other thing we see in John chapter 8 is Jesus ministering to Gentiles and praising non-Jewish people. I mean, this would be as surprising as in the church, getting up and praising a Hindu man here, saying he's much better than all of you Christians. I tell you, I sometimes say that.

The way some Christians behave. That's exactly what we see here. This Roman centurion.

You read in Matthew 8 verse 5, Jesus says about him, I tell you, he says, I have never, verse 10, found such great faith in anyone in Israel. I have never found such faith in anyone in Israel. Lord Jesus, not even in your mother Mary.

I mean what I said. Not in anyone in Israel. What a word of praise he gave to that Roman centurion.

I see here that Jesus was a person who always knew how to appreciate. Whenever he saw something good in somebody, he appreciated it. We are such misers, just like we are misers in money, we are misers in expressing appreciation.

That shows we are not like Christ. I know in my younger days I was like that too. That I was not like Jesus.

But I have learned to follow Jesus here, to express my appreciation. For non-Christians. This chap is a non-Christian.

Jesus appreciated, yeah, there's something good I see there. And we need to, in children, people who don't have much Bible knowledge, what Bible knowledge did this chap have? But Jesus appreciated faith, he appreciated goodness, wherever he saw it. I like that.

Because the gospel was not meant just for one little community of people, it was meant for the whole world. That's what we see here. And we see also in Matthew 8 verse 28, Jesus encountering demons for the first time.

I told you earlier in Matthew chapter 4, that is the first time in history, in the Bible that you read of a man coming face to face with the devil, is Jesus Christ. And that's part of the New Covenant. Jesus didn't confront the Philistines and the Amorites and the Hittites like the people in the Old Testament.

He confronted Satan. And as long as anybody is fighting human enemies, he's under the Old Covenant. Ephesians 6 verse 12 says, we don't wrestle with flesh and blood.

Anyone who wrestles with flesh and blood, go back to the Old Covenant. There they fought with flesh and blood. Philistines, Canaanites, Egyptians, Syrians, all types of people.

And you can be fighting with your wife or husband or mother-in-law or brother-in-law or neighbor or somebody in the office or your boss, it doesn't matter, it's all Philistines and Canaanites and everybody else. Flesh and blood. That is the clearest proof that you also have not understood anything about the New Covenant.

A man who enters into the New Covenant stops fighting with human beings. Jesus would never fight with human beings. You could spit on him, call him a devil, do what you like.

You couldn't get him to fight with you because he's concentrated in fighting the devil. It's one mark of New Covenant Christians. Where do you find people like that? And here we find him confronting demons now.

He dealt with the devil first, the strong man. Now he deals with the people who belong to him. And here he deals with this man who has got thousands of demons.

His name was Legion and he had at least 2,000 demons because we read that the demons went into the pigs. And so many demons in one person. This is the first time in the Bible that you read of a man possessed by demons and somebody casting it out.

I mean we read of evil spirit coming up in Saul, King Saul in the Old Testament. But here were demons in a person and somebody cast it out. That was Jesus.

That's a new part of New Covenant ministry. And he gave us the same authority. We read here that the demons said, Have you come here, verse 29, to torment us before the time? You know, they know there's a time coming when they'll be tormented for eternity in a lake of fire.

That's described in Revelation 20. And they knew that time had not yet come. I mean they know Scripture very well.

They know Jesus has come only the first time. He's got to die and the church has got to be built. And later he'll come and then they'll be cast in the lake of fire.

And he says, It isn't yet time. Are you going to torment us before that? They knew he had authority. And he didn't send them to hell.

You know there are some people I have heard who try to cast out demons like this. I command you in Jesus name, go away to hell. Rubbish.

If Jesus couldn't send them to hell, who are you going to send them to hell? There is a time when they will be sent into hell. We can only command that demon to get out of that person. I never tell a demon to go to hell.

I never tell anybody to go to hell. Like a lot of people do. I tell them to get out of that person.

Stop oppressing him. Leave him alone. And so they said, Can you let us go into the pigs now? Have you ever thought why Jesus allowed this? You know there are some people who say animals are as important as human beings.

But here is the clearest proof, they are not. At least Jesus didn't think so. You know the Jews were not supposed to raise pigs.

It was forbidden in Leviticus chapter 11. And these guys were all disobeying God's word and raising pigs because people like to eat pork. I am not talking about the new covenant, you can eat it today.

But it is forbidden under the old covenant. And so, I think that is one reason. The other thing is that Jesus wanted this man to know that the demons had left him.

I mean if you just tell a person the demons are gone, how will he know? He said, There they are. They have gone into those pigs. See the pigs going down? He knew for certain they are gone.

And then we see in Matthew chapter 9 about his calling Matthew and other disciples. I want you to move to chapter 10. The thing I want you to see here, we are talking about ministry now.

The new covenant ministry. With Jesus initiated. With the supernatural gift of healing.

Healing lepers. And you know, casting out demons. Opening up to Gentiles, to non-Jews.

And then in chapter 10. We read that this authority that Jesus had. He gives to the 12 disciples whom he has called.

That is where we come in. See now we see Jesus. And in the new covenant he is giving this authority to others.

He called his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits. Cast them out to every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. He gave them authority to, verse 8. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.

Freely you receive, freely give. And he taught them how to serve in this new covenant time. Now remember this.

This was a particular time. When he was sending them out only within the borders of Israel. Because time had not yet come to reach out to the rest of the world.

That would come after the day of Pentecost. So he said to them, now this is not the time to go to the Gentiles, verse 5. Or to the Samaritans. Now only to Israel.

First we want to give these fellows an opportunity to hear the word. The gospel is preached to the Jew first and then to the others. And the Jews rejected it.

Then Jesus said, okay. Now, in Acts chapter 1 he said, now you will be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. So for those, that period of time, before the day of Pentecost.

He told them to go only to the Jews. And he said, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. And various things there.

Now what I want you to notice is that these people were given authority to go and preach the gospel. The gospel will be confirmed by these signs. Now it's not the gospel we preach today.

They were not preaching Christ died for your sins like we preach today. But we can see here a picture of what became completely fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. So what happened on the day of Pentecost? The Holy Spirit came upon his disciples.

And they got power to be the witnesses of Jesus under the uttermost parts of the earth. Now that's what we want to look at. New covenant ministry that began on the day of Pentecost.

In Mark chapter 9, verse 1. The coming of the Holy Spirit is described like this. It's described in many ways. In Mark chapter 9, verse 1. The coming of the Holy Spirit is described as the kingdom of God coming with power.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was the coming of God's rule on earth. It didn't mean he ruled the whole earth, but he ruled 120 people. The fire of God came and filled 120 people.

The kingdom of God means the rule of God. The sphere in which God rules is called the kingdom of God. Today we don't use the word kingdom so much.

We talk about government. We don't talk about the kingdom of India. In the old British Raj days they did that.

Now we say the government of India. The area where India governs. The kingdom of God is the area where God governs.

Where he rules. And you know whether you are a part of God's kingdom by just asking yourself whether God rules your life. It's very simple.

That's all there is to the kingdom of God. It's the sphere. For example, you go to Sri Lanka.

Indian government has no power there. Whatever rules you have here don't apply there. But everyone who lives within this country comes under the rulership of the government of India.

Now there can be rebels in this country like Naxalites and terrorists. And a lot of Christians behave like that who say they are part of the kingdom of God. But the real citizens of God's kingdom are those who have God's rule over their life completely.

Please remember that. So on that day the Holy Spirit came and gave them gifts. So I want you to turn to Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 and see what happened there.

In Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 the coming of the Holy Spirit. Before that I want you to see Acts 1 verse 1. Now Acts 1 verse 1. And the book of Acts by the way was written by Luke. And we know that he wrote the gospel of Luke as well.

We can say this is the second book of Luke. First book of Luke and the second book of Luke. The first is about Jesus' life and the second is about the disciples, mostly Paul.

Because Luke was a very close co-worker and follower, a traveler with Paul. So Luke wrote two books, the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. And he refers to the gospel which is describing the whole life of Jesus from the time of his birth to the time of his death and resurrection and ascension.

How does he describe it? In Acts 1 verse 1 he says, The first account, or what we know as the gospel of Luke, I composed, O Theophilus. That one is also written to Theophilus. Which means just friend of God.

Now notice how he describes his gospel. All that Jesus began to do and teach. That's how he describes the gospel of Luke.

All that Jesus began to do and teach. So, using your simple sense of logic, what do you think Acts of the Apostles is about? All that Jesus continued to do and teach. That's the Acts of the Apostles.

The gospel is all that Jesus began to do and teach in his physical body. The Acts is all that Jesus continued to do and teach through his spiritual body. In both cases it is Jesus doing and teaching.

There with his physical body. Here with a number of people who are his spiritual body. And then we come to Acts chapter 2. We must keep that in mind.

When we read Acts of the Apostles and say, because Acts of the Apostles, that first verse, and what follows on from that is to describe the entire New Covenant period. What are we supposed to do today? Jesus wants to continue to do and teach what he did in Nazareth and in Palestine, in Israel 2,000 years ago. He wants to continue to do and teach through you and me.

It's Jesus continuing to do and teach through you and me. I want that in my life. I want to treat other people the way when I deal with people, I want Jesus to do something for them through me.

I want Jesus to speak through my lips. He can speak through your lips. You must believe it.

Okay. Now in Acts chapter 2 it says when the Holy Spirit was outpoured. Peter describes it like this.

In the last days, verse 17, I'll pour out my Spirit on all mankind. This is not, didn't happen in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Holy Spirit came on one person here, one person there, sometimes hundreds of years apart.

The Spirit was on Moses and then the Spirit was on Joshua. Then we wait a long time. And then in the book of Judges, the Spirit was on Samson, then on Samuel, then on King Saul and David, Elijah, Elisha, and the different prophets, Isaiah onwards.

But it is only on a few individuals. Everyone didn't have the Holy Spirit. And now it says everyone, all mankind, every single person can have the same Holy Spirit that came upon Elijah and Elisha and John the Baptist.

Do you know that? I mean, you won't have the same ministry. What is the same power to do the ministry which God has called you to do? Well, you know that Samuel and John the Baptist didn't have the same ministry. Elijah did so many miracles, John the Baptist did none.

Yet they had the same Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit told Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, your son is going to have the Spirit of Elijah. Amazing! And yet Elijah did so many miracles including raising the dead and John the Baptist didn't even do one.

Can two people have the same Spirit and one do so many miracles and the other do none? Yes! And Elijah and John the Baptist are the most classic examples of that. It's not a question of ministry. Same Spirit doing different ministries.

The same Spirit that was in Elijah was in John the Baptist. He did miracles through Elijah but he prepared the way for Jesus through John the Baptist. So today the Holy Spirit can be on two believers and through one person he may do miracles like he does through Elijah and through another person he may just prepare people to live a holy life.

And just by the way, Jesus said John the Baptist was greater than Elijah. That means the one who prophesied and proclaimed God's word and prepared God's people for the coming of Christ was greater than the one who did so many miracles and brought fire down from heaven and raised the dead. I don't think many Christians understand that.

Yeah. So, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all mankind and it doesn't say here in verse 17 your sons and daughters will do miracles. No.

But it does say here your sons and daughters will prophesy. And that's another word which is completely mistaken. In the Old Testament, prophecy was mainly foretelling the future.

Mainly about the coming of Christ and about things that were going to happen to Israel in the future, etc. But in the New Testament, prophecy is not foretelling the future at all. 1 Corinthians 14.3 says, Prophecy is speaking forth the word of God to build up the body of Christ.

To encourage, challenge, rebuke, comfort, build up the body of Christ. You never read of any other type of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14. Now, we do read in the Acts of the Apostles about one man called Agabus.

He was a rare among the prophets who did say something about the future. In Acts 11, he said about there's going to be a famine. In Acts 23, he prophesied that Paul would be bound in Jerusalem.

But, in both those cases, he never told people what to do. In New Testament prophecy, even if somebody tells the future, he never tells anybody what to do. He never said, there's a famine, so you fellows should send money.

No, no, no, no. He knew where to stop. He didn't say to Paul, you're going to be bound, so don't go.

He never said, so don't go. Then he would have been a false prophet. False prophets are those who tell you what to do.

Very simple guideline by which to find out false prophets. You never find a New Testament prophet telling another person what to do. In the Old Testament, they did.

The kings would come to the prophets, tell us what to do. Yeah, hang on, he'd say, come back after a couple of days, I'll tell you. He'd tell you, you must do this.

But, there's not a single instance in the New Testament of a person prophesying and telling another person what to do. If the Christian church had only understood this, they'd have been saved from so many calamities. So many people are being told whom to marry and whom not to marry.

By self-appointed prophets. Where to go, what to do, what house to buy, and what job to take. Christianity is in the Old Testament, and these are false prophets.

Because there is no such prophet today in the New Testament who can tell you what to do. You know why? I'll tell you why. Hebrews chapter 8. He's saying, the days are coming, verse 9, when I will make a new covenant.

Hebrews 8, verse 8. I will make a new covenant. And this will not be like the old covenant, verse 9. Because in this covenant, verse 11, they will not teach everyone, his fellow citizens, saying, know the Lord. Or know the Lord's will.

For all will know me personally. From the least, least means a little child, to the greatest saint. Even the little child can know God personally as a father.

That's why it says, all can prophesy, and that means the Sons and Daughters, Acts 2.17. When it says your sons and daughters will prophesy, it doesn't mean they'll go around telling other people what to do. Like you see in a lot of charismatic circles. A lot of people say, somebody prophesied over me that this is what I'm going to do.

I say, brother, are you in the old covenant or the new covenant? And don't believe all these prophecies. The Bible says, we are not to despise prophesying, but we must judge prophesying. Very clearly, it says that in 1 Corinthians 14.

And, you know, we can have a completely wrong understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, if we don't understand the new covenant. That's what I'm trying to say. And the other thing I want you to see is, in the Old Testament, it was very rare for a woman to prophesy.

There were some rare cases like Deborah and Huldah in the book of Jeremiah and the book of Kings and in the book of Judges. But mostly it was men. But in the new covenant, men and women can prophesy.

And what is prophecy? 1 Corinthians 14.3, they can speak to the edification of the church to build up challenge and courage. When a church lives in the old covenant, they will not allow the women to share anything. They'll think the men are superior, the multitudes of churches like that.

And I think a lot of us here have been under the old covenant for many years. In fact, many of our churches live in the old covenant. Our own churches.

They think they're in the new covenant. They're not. Do you allow the women to prophesy? You know, there we can understand the hang-ups that brethren people have and Pentecostals have and Charismatics have.

We have a culture that holds us back from the freedom of the Holy Spirit. We think we are free. We're not free.

We're bound by traditions as much as the Pharisees were bound. And Jesus found it so difficult to deliver people from the traditions of the Pharisees. And I tell you, He finds it very difficult with a lot of Christians today.

So what suffers? God's work suffers. So I want to encourage you sisters to claim Acts 2.17 and learn to prophesy. The only thing the Bible forbids that a woman can't do is to teach and to have authority, to have a position as an elder.

Teaching is authoritative. It's like what I'm doing right now. Prophesying is different from teaching.

They're two completely different gifts. Prophesying is to encourage people, to build them up. Teaching is authoritative, giving direction to the church.

Eldership is giving direction to the church. You're a blessed husband if you've got a wife who can prophesy. I feel sorry for a husband who shuts his wife's mouth and prevents her from prophesying.

You're going to be the loser. I would say that. You are going to be the loser.

Fifty percent of your life will be cut off from direction from the Lord because God gave you somebody to prophesy and you won't listen. Because of culture and tradition. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Now I understand that to mean that God will speak to us through supernatural means.

I don't think there's much difference between dreams and visions. The point is that God can speak to us when our minds are sort of resting in a supernatural way, warning us. You read right in the big book of Matthew, in the first two chapters of God warned people, don't go that way, don't go that way, through a dream.

And we must be open to that. These are some of the blessings coming to the Holy Spirit. And again it says, verse 18, I tell you, my men and women, verse 18, will prophesy.

Why in the world does God say that twice? In verse 17 and verse 18. The women will prophesy, the women will prophesy. God's trying to break this power of tradition, but He doesn't succeed with many people.

That's why I've always encouraged you folks. Be open. Let the Holy Spirit come upon you and put something on your heart that can bless the church.

No, don't say I'm a woman. Well, if you're an old covenant woman, okay. But you're welcome to enter the new covenant if you want to.

God won't force anybody. Do you know that God doesn't even force people to go to heaven? Tell me, which is more important? To go to heaven or to prophesy? Well, you surely know. To go to heaven is more important.

But God doesn't even force people to go to heaven. Where in the world is He going to force you to prophesy? He's not going to catch you by the neck and say, come on, prophesy. You've got to be open to go to heaven.

You've got to be open to prophesy. And if the people in your church don't allow you to do that, you pray that God will give you other openings somewhere else. Your church will miss the blessing, but you can be a blessing somewhere else.

When you visit somebody's home or somebody visits your home, you can bless them. You can't be hindered. You can't keep a good woman down.

I believe we really need to be open. It's one of the things in the New Covenant where many people have missed out. And of course, some have gone to an extreme.

They've gone right off on a tangent. And we have women pastors and leaders and Bible teachers and all that type of stuff. That's one extreme.

Now, just because somebody's ministry is blessed doesn't mean that they are doing the right thing. Now, some people say, that some woman's ministry is being blessed. It doesn't mean they are doing the right thing.

Do you know there's a place in the Old Testament, in Numbers chapter 20, where it says that Moses was told to speak to the rock the second time. Moses got so angry he hit the rock. He disobeyed God.

But was there a blessing? Yes. There was such a blessing that the water flowed from that rock that two million people could drink water. Imagine a person being a blessing to two million people and he himself has disobeyed God.

So once the blessing was over to two million people, God said, OK, Moses, you come here. I've got to deal with you now. You disobeyed me.

But Lord, I was a blessing to two million people. Don't tell me all that. You disobeyed me and therefore you will be punished.

You will not enter the land of Canaan. That's the clearest example that a man can be disobeyed in his private life. A man or a woman can disobey God's word and still can be a blessing to two million people.

There are people whom Jesus said will say to the Lord, Lord, I cast out many demons in your name. Don't you think those people were blessed? But the people who cast out the demons went to hell. Lord, we did miracles in your name.

So that's just in passing. Now I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians in chapter 12. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we read about these gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And I want you to notice first of all that it says in the last verse, after giving a description of these gifts, verse 31, earnestly desire the greater gifts. You never get anything from God if you don't earnestly desire it. God doesn't give it.

Because when we don't earnestly desire something, which God said you must earnestly desire, it shows that we are telling God, I don't really value that. Oh, I can get along without that. If God says, I want you to have something, you say, no, no, no, I don't need it.

I can get along without that. The Bible says earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Have you obeyed that command? I want to ask all of you.

Or have you left it just to one or two people to seek it? Do you know when I started earnestly desiring spiritual gifts? When I was 21 years old and I got baptized. And I was in an assembly called the Brethren Assembly, which didn't teach one single thing about spiritual gifts. But I read the Bible.

And I saw here that I must earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. So I said, okay, well, I must earnestly desire spiritual gifts. I'm going to do it.

And then again it says in chapter 14 verse 1, a second time. It's like that Acts chapter 2, a second time it says the women will prophesy. Here it says a second time in chapter 14 verse 1, earnestly desire spiritual gifts.

Boy, how many times does God have to say to us before we listen. And especially if you want one gift to desire, don't desire for healing and miracles, desire prophecy. That is the greatest gift by the way.

The greatest gift is not the gift of miracles. Of doing miracles. The greatest gift is not the gift of healing.

I mean if you are a person fooled by all the advertisements of Christian evangelists, that's another thing. You can believe them if you like. I believe the Bible.

The Bible says the greatest gift is the gift of prophecy. To be able to speak to people in a way that will draw them close to God. You know if Jesus hadn't spoken to people, and he had only healed, healed, healed, healed, there wouldn't have been 120 waiting for the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

There would have been no church. The church was built by the word. Jesus said, he who listens to my word and obeys it, builds upon a rock that will never shake.

That's the church. It was not built by miracles, it was built by the spoken word. And throughout the Bible, in the Acts of the Apostles, you see that it is the spoken word through which the church is built.

And that's why on the day of Pentecost, it was a tongue of fire that was on the heads of all those people. So the Bible says that everyone can prophesy, but it says you won't get it unless you honestly desire it. Now when I read that, 46 years ago, I said, boy, I don't care whether my church tells me to desire

prophecy or not, they didn't even believe the gifts existed.

I said, so what? The Bible says it exists, and I'm so thankful that I earnestly desire to prophesy. And I understood there in verse 3, what it meant to prophesy, it is to speak to people in such a way as to build them up, that's edification. Exhortation is encouragement, and challenge and consolation is comfort.

To speak in such a way that you encourage people, challenge them, comfort them, and build them up. We must all desire for that. It's the greatest gift in the body of Christ.

And for that we need the power of the Holy Spirit upon us. And we never stop seeking for it, because God wants to give it to us more and more and more and more. And if you... There's a difference between prophesying and being a prophet.

A prophet is one who has a permanent gift of prophecy. Prophesying is... Anybody can have for a short time, and I'll show you that in chapter 14. It says here in chapter 14, verse 29, the New Testament church meeting, let two or three prophets speak.

Only two or three prophets in a very large church. In a smaller church, one or two. And then, after that, verse 31, you can all prophesy.

Only two or three prophets. And all can prophesy. You see the difference? And he goes on to say, he says earlier in chapter 12, and verse 29, all are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets.

If all are not prophets, how can all prophesy? Because to be a prophet is different from prophesying. Prophesying is an occasional thing. A man or a woman may prophesy for two or three minutes.

And once in a while it can be a really powerful word. But a prophet is someone who always can prophesy. Because there's a permanent gift on him.

So, now we turn to chapter 12. We read about... In chapter 12, 1 Corinthians 12, we read about a lot of... an illustration of the body. He's talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And then he talks about the body. And he says here, verse 14, the body is not one member. The foot needs the hand, the hand needs the foot, the eye needs the ear, the ear needs the... And he's talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

You see the connection? If this is the body of Christ, he's using the example of the body. And we know it's the body of Christ. In the body of Christ, one person is an eye.

One person is an ear. It's an illustration. Don't take it literally.

And one person is a hand. One person is a foot. Each has got a different gift.

But each has got a function. And he says, if the whole body, verse 17, were an eye, where would the hearing be? I mean, if your whole body is full of eyes, eyes, eyes. This is ridiculous.

That's not a body. And he says everybody had... If everybody was a prophet, or everybody was an apostle, or everybody had the gift of healing. That's ridiculous.

But God has given these different gifts to different ones. And so he speaks here about... There are many gifts, verse 4, of the same Holy Spirit. Very varieties of gifts.

There are varieties of ministries. You know, these gifts are exercised in different ministries. The same Lord.

And the effect of these ministries are the same, and the same Father. So Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In those verses.

And to every single person... Now here's the verse for you. To every single person, if you're a believer in the body of Christ, that's for you, is given some manifestation of the Holy Spirit for the good of other people. You know, that's the difference between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

If I have the fruit of the Spirit, joy, for example. Who is blessed? You or me? Me. My life is full of joy.

Or if I have peace, who sleeps peacefully at night? You or me? Me. The fruit of the Spirit blesses me. My nerves are calm if I have the gift of patience.

Of the fruit of patience. Long-suffering. But the gifts of the Holy Spirit are always to bless other people.

If I have the gift of prophesying, it's to bless others. If I have the gift of healing, it's to bless others. If I have a word of wisdom, it's to help others.

This is the difference between the fruit and the gifts. So if you're a very selfish person, you'll have no desire for the gifts of the Holy Spirit at all. You see why many people don't seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit? It doesn't help me in any way.

I'm not particularly interested in helping others. Oh well, of course you don't need the gifts. I mean, why do you need the gifts if you have no interest in serving other people? It's only somebody who has a passion to do something for others.

And Lord, I need to be anointed. I need to have a word from above. I mean, if you can come to a meeting where everybody is invited to share, like some of our Wednesday meetings, and you come there and say, well, I'm not interested in blessing anybody.

I just want to hear. Lazy, selfish way you come to the meeting. Well, God's not going to give you anything in a hundred years.

No. And you'll be a useless member of the body of Christ. You'll be a part of the body like a hand, but a paralyzed hand.

A lot of Christians are like paralyzed hands. They're being carried around absolutely useless. God doesn't want you to be like that.

Everyone is given some manifestation of the spirit for the common good. It could be a word of wisdom. It could be a word of knowledge.

It could be of faith, healing. I don't have time to go into all these gifts, what they mean. It could be speaking in tongues.

I remember when I sought God for the gift of tongues. I said, Lord, it says here in 1 Corinthians 14 in verse 5 that he who speaks in a tongue, edifies himself. 1 Corinthians 14, verse 4. One who speaks in a tongue, builds himself up.

Oh, I said, Lord, I want to build myself up. I mean, I want to build myself up through reading the Bible. I want to build myself up through fellowship.

I want to build myself up through prayer. I want to build myself up through listening to messages. And I want to build myself up spiritually.

One more way of doing it, speaking in tongues, I want it. Why? For the sake of others. Remember, gifts are for others.

So I didn't want the gift of tongues just to get some sensational feeling myself. That's how some people seek it. And that's why sometimes they get a counterfeit gift or don't get it.

I wanted it for others. You say, how for others? I say, Lord, I always want to be fresh. 24 hours a day.

I never want to be dry in my life, even for one single day of my life. I don't want to be dry for one minute. Anytime, morning, noon, or night, if somebody meets me, I want to be fresh.

And if speaking in tongues will help me to be fresh, I want it. And thank God He gave it to me. And that's why Paul said in verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 14, I wish you all spoke in tongues.

But, if you had a choice, I wish you all prophesied. That's much better. Because you'll bless other people.

It's good to edify ourselves. But if you can speak in a way that blesses others. And I want you to notice the gifts God's given in the church in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 28.

Who are the ones whom God has placed number one in the church? Not the healers. It's very important to know that because today, Christendom goes after the healers. I want you to see your healers are number four.

We need to recognize God's order. Number one are the apostles. Apostles are those who plant churches and who are elders to the elders of those churches.

Prophets. Prophets are those, not those who prophesy, all prophets. Prophets are those who speak God's word with encouragement, conviction, building up power.

That's number two. Third are teachers. Those who explain the word of God.

You read the Bible and a teacher reads that same verse and you say, hey, I never saw that before. That's a teacher. So those are the first three gifts in the order in the church.

It's written first, second, third. Apostles, prophets, teachers. Then, number four is all the rest.

All the rest. He doesn't say four, five, six, seven. All the rest.

Then, miracles, healings, then healings, helps, various kinds of tongues. They don't know who's four, five, and six, but they're all out there. He just mentions one, two, and three.

It's very important for us to understand that because today a lot of people don't seem to recognize that the gift of the ministry of the word, the teaching of the word, is the primary gift with which the church is built up. And I believe there's a great need in the world today and I want to encourage young people, young brothers and sisters to really seek God for the gift of prophecy. That is how the body of Christ is built.

Now let's turn to Ephesians chapter four. In Ephesians chapter four we read and verse eleven. Jesus Christ, when he ascended up to heaven, he gave some as apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers.

Pastors being shepherds. We need all those gifts in the church. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, those who reach others to the gospel, shepherds who take care of the sheep, and teachers.

These are the five primary gifts for building in local churches. And why were they given? They were given so that these people can equip all the other believers. Notice that.

Verse thirteen. It's very important to see verse eleven to thirteen together. Eleven and twelve together.

Very important for you. You may not be an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, or teacher. Fine.

There are very few of them. But when God gives a man the gift of being an apostle, prophet, shepherd, evangelist, teacher, the purpose is that he equips all the other two hundred people sitting in the church so that, verse twelve, they listen to this, they build the body of Christ. Did you notice that in verse twelve? It's not the apostles who build the body of Christ.

It's not the prophets, it's not the shepherds. They equip the saints, and the saints go out and build the body of Christ. Now if you don't do that, you're failing in your duty.

You can't leave it to the apostles. Read verse eleven and twelve carefully. And thus we all attain to the unity of the faith, to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

And like that, the whole, when every, the last part of verse sixteen in closing, with the proper working of each individual part, the body grows for the building up of itself in love. And so we see in the new covenant, it's not outstanding people like Jeremiah and Elijah and all that. It's each person.

And every ministry is for the building up of the body of Christ. In the Old Testament, all the great prophets, you know, they never brought life to people. Everyone, Jeremiah preached for forty years, and the Israelites still went to Babylon.

Now and then there would be miracles, miracles to fight the enemies, kill the enemies, stop the sun, all types of things, but never to bring life to people. Whereas in the new covenant ministry, every gift is to build up the body, to give life. Wherever you go, you must give life to people.

Rivers of living water, water of life flowing out through you. Every believer needs that. That's ministry.

And there's a lot more that could be said on that line, but I want you to think about that. This is new covenant ministry, and this is what the new covenant is all about. Far superior to the old covenant.

All of us are equal and have equal opportunities. Let's pray. So, if you have been stirred, according to your need today, I want you to respond to the word of God that you have heard, and to say, Lord, I'm sorry that I've been so lazy, that I've been fooled by my tradition and culture, and I have actually hindered your work in the church, because of my tradition.

Repent of it. Make up for it in the coming days, because of my culture. Because of my prejudices.

Because of my laziness. You can hinder the body of Christ in many ways. Because of your tradition, because of your laziness, because of your culture, because anything.

Now, Lord, I want to repent of all that. That means I want to turn around from all that. And I want to respond to your word.

Make me an effective member of the body of Christ. Thank you, Father. Do it, Lord, in these closing days of time.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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