

God In Us

Gifts of the Spirit

Previously

- We began our series asking, “Who is the Holy Spirit”, and traced a theology of the Spirit from Genesis to the Gospels.
 - The Holy Spirit is a *who*, a person. Not a force or impersonal power.
 - The Holy Spirit is a creative person, brining the cosmos into being in Genesis one. So the Holy Spirit is active.
 - He also is interactive, and enabled Israel to hear God’s voice and be led by Spirit-filled individuals.
 - Whenever the Holy Spirit filled a person, he brought power, to help accomplish a certain mission (Prophets like Elijah, Judges like Sampson, Kings like David).
 - The Holy Spirit filled Jesus, and Jesus said the Spirit would empower and fill the first Christians.
- Last week we arrived in the book of Acts and the Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost. It’s here we see how the Spirit baptized and filled the first Christians.
 - “A Pentecostal is simply a Christian who believes that the book of Acts provides a model for the contemporary church.” (Menzies)
 - In Acts the baptism of the Spirit happened regularly and importantly for people once they had trusted in Jesus. It was a normal part of becoming a Christian.

- With this baptism came empowerment (“dunamis” power) for mission (the help share the gospel), and was not restricted to the Apostles as we see multiple times in Acts.
 - Acts 2 – Jerusalem
 - Acts 8. 15-17 – Samaritans.
 - Acts 10. 49-48 – Cornelius and his household.
 - Acts 19. 5-7 – Ephesus.
- We also talked about tongues, or spiritual language, and noted that it is with regularity in the Acts narratives that tongues seem to occur when the Spirit fills people.
 - Why tongues – in Acts 2 it was a sign that the gospel wasn’t reserved for Israel, but for all people. How can people hear the gospel unless someone speaks their language? So it was prophetic *and* practical!
- Having considered the work of the Spirit in Acts, a brief theological survey of the Spirit, we considered this.
 - Spirit baptism is for us all.
 - It is biblically normative.
 - The Spirit will fill us, but not force us into anything.
 - We can anticipate this occurrence in faith and trust.
 - We can set aside preconceived notions, fears and wonderings because God only has good things for his people.

Gifts of the Spirit

- is an indiscriminate outpouring, an abundance of God’s presence with all who are open to him.

- When Peter cites Joel chapter 2 (God says he will “pour out my Spirit on all people”) this really happens. It happened to Peter, who wasn’t anyone special.
- Where before the Spirit was given in measure to accomplish God’s work in the world, now it’s flowing like a torrent – from isolated cases, to something more like the positive version of a pandemic.
- Do you see the connection, between Jesus interacting, inviting and loving outsiders in the Gospels, and then him giving those very same kind of people his empowering Spirit, his presence, so that even more outsiders can become insiders. Jesus is for all people. The Holy Spirit is for all people.
- Today we’re looking at *what happens when* the Spirit fills a group of people and what comes along with that. So we’re going to talk about the *gifts of the Spirit*.

Gifts of the Spirit in Paul’s letters

- Can we understand the nature of the gifts of the Spirit unless we understand the indiscriminate outpouring of the Holy Spirit? It’s where we have to begin.
- In the first century people were coming to Christ, they were filled with the Spirit, which meant the appearance of what are called gifts of the Spirit.
- We read about the gifts of the Spirit primarily in two or three texts:
 - Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 (and some argue Ephesians 4).

- The gifts Paul writes about likely aren't exhaustive nor do they concur in the texts where they're mentioned for a couple of reasons.
 - First, they are shared by Paul in these letters in context of correction. The churches mentioned were a little bit disorderly at times in their worship gatherings and so Paul writes to correct some of this. He does so to help bring some stability but also to ensure character is prized by the churches – we'll come back to why character matters in a moment.
 - This is an important point – there is work by the Spirit activity in these believers because they have been filled, and the gifts are being expressed. Now Paul isn't layout out a gift-assessment guide here, but simply helping to keep these communities orderly (The Holy Spirit is about peace).
 - This means it was normal for these first churches to be bursting at the seams with Spirit activity, which is a good thing!
 - Second, Paul shares the gifts of the Spirit in an even broader context of unity, equality and love. In other words they're talked about because character is what Paul's concerned about in these churches.
- This leads us to an important distinction we need to understand when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit and the *fruit of the Spirit*.

No Fruit, No Gifts

- For Paul, being filled with the Holy Spirit and lacking good character is totally incongruent.
- If the Holy Spirit is in us there will be fruit or evidence. God-like character.
 - The fruit of the Spirit should be evident in us all (Gal 5. 22-26, Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, self-control).
- The fruit of the Spirit is about character and should be seen in each of us.
- The gifts of the Spirit are about how the Church functions.
- Paul argues in each of these passages that you can't truly have one without the other. That without character we can't function – a lack of character (fruit of the Spirit) is actually counterintuitive to the use of the gifts of the Spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 13. 1-3. The gifts of the Spirit will be useless unless we are imbued with the fruit of the Spirit.
 - I can have all the gifts in the world but “If I don't have love, I am nothing...” (1 Cor 13. 1-3)

Gifts of the Spirit – Variation, Unity and Equality

- Paul writes about the gifts in terms of variation, unity and equality.
- He says there is One Spirit, One Body, Many Parts and therefore Many Gifts.

- Now, when the Spirit “came upon” a figure in Israel’s history they had certain abilities to perform a certain purpose. When the Spirit “comes upon all people” we are each endowed with abilities to establish the purposes of God. The expression of gifts may vary, but the general purpose is the same.
- The purpose of these gifts, therefore, is always for the benefit of those around us. They should mark our unity, equality, love, and oneness – as Jesus prayed (John 17. 11).
- In Paul’s writing we can see that the expression of the gifts of the Spirit must not be scary, harmful, disorderly or prideful. “...not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think...” (Rom 12. 3), “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor 12.7), “promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” (Eph 4. 16)
- In other words, when the Spirit of God is at work through us it will be marked by love and unity in a wonderful variety of ways.
- Here’s the problem sometimes. Because of how we might perceive the kingdom to work we sometimes see some gifts as lesser and some greater.
 - This is not Paul’s perspective whatsoever, in fact he’s writing about the gifts to correct this kind of thinking altogether.

- Luke shows us how important a character like Stephen was who had the gift of service as deacon (Acts 7).
- All gifts are “spiritual”. Each gift listed is given by the Spirit and expressed by the Spirit. They all help to accomplish the same general purpose.
 - We can be tempted to order our place in the body or gifts in the Spirit according to our kingdoms and not Jesus kingdom, can’t week. Well, I just stack chairs, or serve in the nursery.
 - Who did Jesus say would be the greatest? (the servant of all). Jesus’ filled with the Spirit to teach and heal, but also to bless children, wash feet and hang on a cross.
 - All gifts are spiritual. The one who helps is not lesser than the one who leads – we are one body with many parts.
- The general purpose of the gifts are to build up or strengthen the church in love, and spread the gospel. We all do this in unique ways.

Gifts of the Spirit – Distinction

- Some have noted we have in recent years gotten carried away with dividing, categorizing and applying the gifts outside of how Paul would have thought about them. (Fee, *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God, God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*)
- Though there is distinction in how the Spirit is displayed in the Church, this does not mean we ought to over-categorize them.

- When we do that we get into trouble. “I have the gift of teaching so I’m not going to help stack those chairs...”
- When considering Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 we can really only break the gifts up into three categories: *forms of service, the miraculous, inspired utterance or speech* (Fee, *God’s Empowering presence*, p. 886).
- One thing is clear, that it is normal that there be an abundance of gifts of the Spirit present in our church – an eclectic, expressive, unified body.
 - The gifts of the Spirit do not make the church like the X-Men or The Avengers, pigeonholing us into one particular superpower.
 - Different people will express different gifts and we can demonstrate more than one gift.
 - Also, though “giving” is listed as gift of the Spirit, we should all be generous.
 - Every Christian life should be marked by humility and service, however that looks in whatever gift shared.

Romans 12

- Exhortation
- Giving
- Leadership
- Mercy/compassion
- Prophecy
- Service/ministry

- Teaching

1 Corinthians 12

- Administration
- Apostle
- Discernment
- Faith
- Healing
- Helps
- Knowledge
- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Teaching
- Tongues
- Tongues interpretation
- Wisdom

Gifts of the Spirit – The Peculiar Gifts...or are they?

- Some of these gifts seem obvious in how they might benefit us, others not so much. This, however, may be because of how we perceive the gifts and where we stand as we consider them.
 - For example: the gift of service or helps might have made little sense to a first century gentile Christian. In their world a servant was lesser than a master. The idea of the gift of serving being on equal footing as leadership or teaching would have been radical, but in this new kingdom and new

definition of greatness this gift makes perfect sense. The gift of giving may have made even little sense to the first century Greco-Roman mind (example, Barnabas).

- Conversely, a gift like speaking in other tongues or healing might seem weird to us, but makes perfect sense in a time without Rosetta Stone or free clinics. How will the gospel advance without a supernatural gift of language? How will the first Christians declare God's concern for the world without a demonstration of God's care for people through physical healing.
- And so, we should consider where we stand in history and what has caused us to think about these gifts as we do.
- Non-the-less, based on extreme examples and disorder in some churches and traditions (not unlike the churches Paul was writing to correct), we might feel tentative toward some of these gifts.
- Miracles, or healing.
 - Paul and the first Christians believed that God, "took an active interest in his universe and in the affairs of his people, it would never have occurred to them that the one who chose to be present with them in the Incarnation and now by his Spirit would do otherwise than graciously intervene in their lives. Those who believe in God as Creator and Sustainer, but who balk at the miraculous both past and present, have created positions for themselves which are difficult to sustain theologically and quite removed from the biblical perspective." (Fee)

- Prophecy
 - To speak the message of God to his people.
 - Israel was always sent a prophet when God was on the move – Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah and later, John.
 - When God's Spirit is given to all people, poured out indiscriminately, we can naturally expect to hear more prophetic voices.
 - Prophets reminded the people of God's truth and what he was saying to them presently.
 - The gift of prophecy is demonstrated when someone hears God and shares what he is saying with the church.
 - The message might speak to the present or the future. It should always build up people up, never tear them down, always be congruent with scripture and discerned by the community.
 - Discernment is given as a gift to aid with this.
- Acts 2 - Tongues in other languages.
 - We first hear of tongues in Acts 2 when the Spirit is given at Pentecost. The believers speak in other languages and the masses in Jerusalem (from all over the ancient world) hear the gospel in their own "tongue". This sign and functional gift clearly flows from Luke's theology of the kingdom being for all people.
- Tongues in Paul's Letters (the worship gathering).
 - Listed amongst the gifts of the Spirit, these gifts are similar to prophecy. God gives a message to his people, someone

delivers it and someone interprets it. These “other tongues” continually speak to God’s concern for all people and the universal diversity of the Church.

- Note that Paul doesn’t condemn the use of public tongues as long as there is an interpretation and things are done in an orderly manner.
- Paul teaches this way for one clear reason – when we’re together the church should be encouraged and edified. Interpreted tongues can do that, but if it’s pandemonium how is it helpful to anyone?
- Again, the gifts are given, as the Spirit is given, to help and to unify.
- Tongues in Paul’s letters (personal expression to God).
 - Paul mentions speaking in tongues personally in prayer as a blessing for the one who is praying (Rom 8, 1 Cor 14). Doug mentioned this last week.
 - When people pray in tongues they are praying in a language given to them by God – we don’t know if this is an earthly language or heavenly language and Paul doesn’t seem too concerned about which it is anyway.
 - Praying in the Spirit or by the Spirit can result in praying in tongues, what Paul calls “inarticulate groanings” (Rom 8. 26-27).
 - It is God’s Spirit praying through us. Personal tongues are not for other people (which is why Paul teaches

interpretation be present for corporate tongues), they are to aid us personally as we pray.

- When we pray in tongues we can pray in accordance with God's will even when we don't know what to pray.
- Praying in tongues doesn't mean we feel ecstatic or out of control, quite contrary actually. It usually feels, I can attest, rather relaxing. There is a letting go and resting in God when I pray in tongues.
- "A prayerless life is one of practical atheism. Prayer is evidence of our utterly dependent status." (Fee) – many would argue that praying in tongues is simply an expression of dependence on the Spirit, to even know how and what to pray in the first place.

In Closing

- The Holy Spirit is present to give us all we need to follow Jesus well. But we must first remember that God is a person. But we don't strain after an experience or gifts – we want to know God and be open to a closer relationship with him.
- Being baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit is just that – knowing God, being empowered by God to live more like he lives.
- We don't have to come to the house of God to meet with him. The arrival of the Spirit means he makes his home in us.

Discussion Questions

- What did you find interesting or learn in this teaching?

- What encouraged you about what we discussed? What was challenging?
- What do you think your gifts are?
- What steps could we take to explore God's fullness and experience more of his Spirit in us?

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit – Scripture to Consider

- The promised gift. **Acts 1:8**
- Jesus, the Spirit Baptizer. **Luke 3:16b**
- The Holy Spirit comes. **Acts 2:1-4**
- Speaking in other tongues. **Acts 2:5-6, 11b**
- Joel's prophecy as spoken by Peter. **Acts 2:17-21**
- For this generation and beyond. **Acts 2:38-39**
- Paul deals with the public use of tongues. **1 Corinthians 12:30**
- Spiritual Gifts. **Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10**
- Paul describes the personal use of tongues.
1 Corinthians 14:2, 14:4

Five accounts in Acts of being filled with the Spirit as a distinct from the indwelling of the Spirit at salvation.

- The day of Pentecost. **Acts 2:4**
- Peter and John in Samaria. **Acts 8:15-17**
- Saul is saved and filled. **Acts 9:1-18, Acts 13:9**
- The House of Cornelius saved and filled with the Spirit. **Acts 10:44-48**
- Ephesian believers baptized in the Holy Spirit. **Acts 19:1-7**

Further Reading

Fee, Gordon D. | *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*

Fee, Gordon D. | *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*

Hayford, Jack | *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*

Horton, Stanley | *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*

Menzies, William W. | *Spirit and Power: The Foundations of Pentecostal Experience*