

“Gifts of the Spirit”
1 Corinthians 12:1 – 18; 14:1

So for the last few weeks we’ve been spending some time talking about and thinking about the person of the Holy Spirit. It stems from this belief that the Holy Spirit recorded as being active in Scripture is the same Holy Spirit active in the church today.

Have you enjoyed it?

We covered a number of areas.

We talked about not quenching the Spirit’s fire; The Holy Spirit through His presence and all His different workings can *put a fire in your life* – a fire to bring light and heat and warmth, fire in eyes, passion in our hearts and zeal in our bellies.

And with that we have to be careful around not letting this Spirit ignited fire be cooled off.

We talked about Pentecost Sunday and the takeaway from that was just like the first believers, we too can have an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

And perhaps a better way to put it is that the Holy Spirit wants to have an encounter with us.

And I gave some provisos around what that means – it’s about nurturing a culture of openness as we lean into what He is doing.

That we do so in natural, low key way and it doesn’t have to be in a time of crisis.

Then last week talked about the fruit of the Spirit – these virtues, these characteristics, the ethical values the Holy Spirit grows in our lives.

And how do we know if the fruit are growing in us?

Do remember the test?

What comes to the surface in relationship and community with others.

So we’ve covered a lot of ground.

When it comes to the Holy Spirit you have to, at some point, you have to talk about the gifts of the Spirit.

So let’s read from 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

For me not long after becoming a believer I had this desire to be a “mouth”, to be a teacher of Biblical truth. That is not a natural gift for me!

I mean, I caught up with someone from high school days and that said they remembered as always being very shy and quiet. And in high school one of most terrifying moments was have to do presentation or a speech in front of my classmates where every time I would go this horrible crimson colour and my voice would shake.

Then alongside there was this desire to care, for encourage, teach, led other Christians – it call to be a pastor. That certainly wasn't from myself.

And with that there were times when I would hear someone speak, or read something, and it'd be like, *something's not right here*. There's something amiss. What that something was often a false teaching or a twisting of God's truth. Sometimes that was apparent straight away, sometimes it took some time to get to the truth.

That's the gift known as the discernment of spirits.

And because God is so generous I received this prayer language called in 1 Corinthians the gift of speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Those are my primary spiritual gifts.

There are natural gifts and talents that we have from birth, and the abilities we gained along the way, become *enhanced*. You might even call these 'creation gifts'.

To have a spiritual gift is to receive a divine, Spirit-enabled ability, to that which you may not be able to do ordinarily.

These are gifts that God in His generosity has given to every follower of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit dwells within believers and as we're told, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given..."

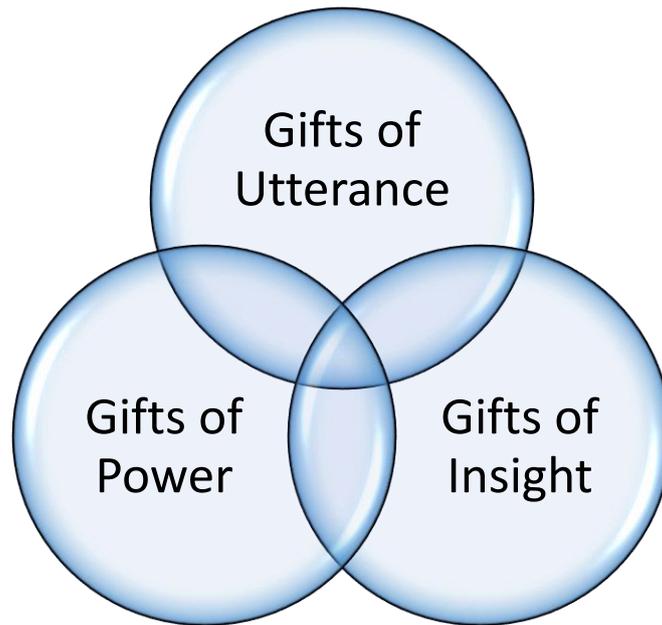
He as distributed them to each one, just as he determines and God has graciously and generously placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

And He does for a reason: for common good.

For good individually and also as a church.

So if you are a follower of Jesus here this morning, you have been given a gift of the Holy Spirit (and would say at least one but most probably more).

You may remember this:



Often there is an overlap in the gifts and the Body works together.

- A word of knowledge might lead to a prayer for healing.
- Discerning of spirits might lead to deliverance.
- A prophecy might inspire faith and so on.

As I've said before, I realise that for some of us here this is old hat. If you've been through the charismatic renewal or been part of a charismatic church, you'll be very familiar what I'm about to share.

So there are:

Gifts of Utterance

Tongues – the ability to speak and pray in a language unknown to the one speaking.

Interpretation of tongues – is the ability to hear, in a corporate setting, someone speaking in tongues and bring that translation for others.

Prophecy – Spontaneous, understandable, inspired speech where someone brings a message from God to the wider body.

We often think of prophecy as 'fore-telling' as prediction, but more often it is 'forth-telling': speaking a message from God to the gathered believers. (Preaching is a sub-set of prophecy in that the preacher seeks the Lord and prepares a message in advance).

Gifts of Power

Faith – Faith is exceptional trust in God in exceptional circumstances.

New Zealand businessman Robert Laidlaw comes to mind. Laidlaw started the Farmers stores and was one of the founders of the BCNZ (renamed Laidlaw College). At age 18 he gave a tenth of his income to the church. By age 25 he gave a full 50% of his income to the church and various other charities and did so until he died.

Healing – the spontaneous recovery or cure that cannot be explained by any other means except for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Miraculous powers – whereas healing is seems miraculous enough, this is something separate. It literally means ‘deeds of power’. Outside of healing two activities come to mind – raising the dead and delivering people from demonic bondage.

Gifts of Insight

Word or message of knowledge – is the divine disclosure of information that the recipient did not know through normal or natural means.

Word or message of wisdom – is a message from God that reveals a practical way forward in the face of a pressing need.

Discernment of Spirits – is the ability to distinguish whether human, demonic or divine power is at work.

Some people under the grouping are seers who are given pictures or visions from God that are beneficial.

There are also ‘dreamers’ – those who have significant dreams from God on a frequent basis.

This is not a complete list either.

There is another list found in Romans 12 that includes serving, teaching, encouragement; generous giving; leadership and mercy.

“Have you experienced any of these gifts before?”

And you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you what gifts the Lord in His generosity has given to you.

When you talk about gifts of the Spirit, in some quarters, you will get pushback.

I’m what is termed a ‘continuous’, that is, I believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit are active today and normative for the church.

Others would say, “No, the gifts ended with Apostles and the first believers.”

So for example, they would say, “When people prayed for Divine healing in the New Testament it *always* occurred and therefore it should be the same today.”

But obviously healing doesn’t always happen and so it not the same gift at work today.

What would you say?

Two verses:

The first is 1 Timothy 5:23, written by Paul to Timothy:

“Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.”

And second one is 2 Timothy 4:20 – this is the Apostle Paul speaking:

“Erastus stayed in Corinth, and *I left* Trophimus sick in Miletus.”

Paul, who moved in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletus and advised Timothy on the medicinal use if wine.

It is clear that although healing is a gift of the Holy Spirit, there is no guarantee that they will always occur *even in New Testament times*.

They would also say, “Prophecy – direct revelation from God – was always 100% correct in the New Testament and now we have God’s complete revelation in Scripture.

Therefore, since people claiming to have a prophecy are often wrong, prophecy is no longer at work today.”

Again, what would you say?

Well what instructions do we find in Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5 verse 20 – 21:

“Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject whatever is harmful.

1 Corinthians chapter 14 gives instructions for prophecy and what is said should be weighed carefully.¹

Contemporary prophecy is not on a par with Scripture.

The Holy Spirit doesn't add to or reveal new gospel content or add to the doctrine or teaching found in Scripture.

It's very contextual; the Spirit speaks in the specific circumstances and situations today.

And there are many historical examples of the gifts still being at work.

Some of you are familiar with Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist pastor in England in the 1800's. Long before the concept of mega-churches was invented, Spurgeon would preach to thousands of people on a Sunday morning.

Spurgeon stated:

I could tell as many as a dozen similar cases in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, 'Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did.

So what's our response this morning?

People do say, “You're right about the gifts but the way they're had been really weird, off-putting and cringe.”

¹ 1 Corinthians 14:29 - 33

I accept that and I would say, we don't practice the gifts of the Spirit from the fruit of the Spirit and one of fruits of the Spirit is self-control.

So when it comes to prophecy, and words of knowledge and wisdom, maybe it would be best to come from place of humility, to say:

"I think maybe God is saying..."

"I feel like the Lord is..."

"I get sense that maybe the Spirit is saying this..."

However, we do have this wonderful encouragement in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1:

"Follow the way of love and *eagerly desire spiritual gifts*, especially the gift of prophecy."

Eagerly desire *healings*. Eagerly desire prophecy, words of knowledge and wisdom. Pursue faith; seek discernment of spirits.

Pursue them; ask for them. Ask for the gift of tongues.

These are not simply a historical record of what is now out of reach.

Most of all welcome the Holy Spirit who gives them.

Do so personally in your own prayer life and also collectively because no one has all the gifts.

And once you've desired the spiritual gifts, we're to put them to use.

Romans 12 verse 6:

"If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;

if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;

if it is giving, then give generously;

if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

So do you know your gifts this morning?

Is there one stands out to you that you'd love to see at work?