

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit Are for Today

By Pastor Jim Feeney

Tongues? Prophecies? Healings? Discerning of spirits? These and other **supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit** were commonplace occurrences in the early Church. On that the Bible record is clear. But should we **expect** such spiritual gifts in our **churches today**? A growing number of Christians responded **“Yes!”** to this question during the twentieth century and up to the present time.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of many of today’s large Pentecostal denominations, with the associated manifestation of various gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Charismatic Movement led millions more Christians in non-Pentecostal denominations to embrace the present-day validity of the gifts of the Spirit.

However, man’s experience and beliefs by themselves do not establish doctrine. That is the prerogative of the Bible. In the balance of this study, we will examine a number of Scripture verses which support the **ongoing validity** of the gifts of the Holy Spirit **throughout the Church Age**.

1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit... (7) Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

This list comprises what Bible teachers commonly call the nine **“gifts of the Holy Spirit.”** In the order listed, as translated in the King James Version, they are:

- the word of wisdom
- the word of knowledge
- faith
- gifts of healing
- the working of miracles
- prophecy
- discerning of Spirits

- divers kinds of tongues
- the interpretation of tongues

Biblically knowledgeable Christians readily admit that these supernatural gifts occurred in the **first century** Church, as recorded in the New Testament. The question that is raised by some, and which is at the heart of this study is: Are these Holy Spirit gifts **still occurring today?** I reply with a heartfelt “**Yes!**” to that question, and I invite you to consider the following Scriptures in support of that belief. (***Bold text throughout this study is mine, added for emphasis.***)

Mark 16:15-18 [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the **world** and preach the good news **to all creation**. [16] **Whoever believes** and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. [17] And these **signs will accompany those who believe**: In my name they will **drive out demons**; they will speak in **new tongues**; [18] they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on **sick people**, and they will **get well**.”

These verses, along with the companion verses in Matthew 28:18-20, are known as the **Great Commission**. These words of Jesus make it quite evident that the Great Commission is **intended** for the **entire Church Age**, stretching from Jesus’ **First Coming to His Second Coming**. Consider the following:

- Jesus commissioned the Church to “go into **all the world**” with the Gospel (vs. 15). **We are still** in the process of fulfilling that command in this, the 21st century.

- Jesus commissioned the Church to “preach the good news **to all creation**” (15). That, too, we are **still** in the process of fulfilling.

- Those to be **affected** by the Great Commission are “**whoever believes...**” (16). “**Whoever**” would encompass all believers in **every century**.

- **Supernatural signs** — including tongues, driving out demons, and healing the sick — were promised to **accompany** the Great Commission. That is, the Gospel preached “to all creation ... [in] all the world ... [to] whoever believes” throughout the Church Age is to be **accompanied by the supernatural gifts** of God.

- In sum, the Great Commission throughout the centuries since Jesus’ death and resurrection involves **preaching** the Gospel of Christ, **accompanied** by God’s confirmation with **supernatural manifestations** — (Mark 16:20) “And the Lord worked with them and **confirmed his word** by the **signs that accompanied it**.”

Matthew 28:19-20 ...**go** and make disciples of **all nations**,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them** to obey **everything** I have **commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, **to the very end of the age.**”

This is Matthew’s record of the same Great Commission that we just looked at. Consistent with Mark’s account, we see that “to the **very end** of the age” we are to “**teach them to obey everything**” Jesus commanded **them**, including His commands to **heal** the sick, to cast **out devils**, etc.).

It is vitally important that we Christians of the 21st century understand that Jesus intended the Great Commission to be pursued **throughout the Church Age** as He originally established it — that is, **WITH accompanying supernatural signs**. Sadly, for too much of history, the Church has been content to **try** to reach the world with the **preached word only**, thereby **violating** the Apostle Paul’s great declaration: “Our gospel came to you **not simply with words, but also with power**, with the **Holy Spirit** and with deep conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

1 Corinthians 1:7-8 Therefore **you do not lack any spiritual gift** as you eagerly **wait for our Lord Jesus Christ** to be revealed. [8] He will keep you strong **to the end**, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*underlining mine*)

Recall our opening list of the **gifts** of the Spirit, taken from chapter 12 of **this** epistle to the Corinthians. Here the apostle Paul is opening this same epistle by assuring them that they will **lack no spiritual gifts** all the way “**to the end**”! Contrary to teaching in some modern circles, the early Church was promised that all the way **to the end** of the Church Age, up to the **coming of the Lord Jesus Christ**, they would “**not lack any spiritual gift.**” Millions of Christians around the world today **continue to believe** straightforward Bible promises like this one, and they see the gifts of the Spirit **regularly manifested** by God in their midst — exactly as promised!

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 My message and my **preaching** were not with wise and persuasive words, but **with a demonstration** of the **Spirit’s power**, [5] so that **your faith** might not **rest** on men’s wisdom, but **on God’s power**.

Today as then, it is vitally important that our preaching of the **Gospel** be **accompanied** with a “**demonstration of the Spirit’s power.**” Such demonstrations in Paul’s ministry included healings and miracles,

along with other gifts of the Spirit. This principle still **applies today**. That is, **the faith** of those we lead to Jesus Christ must **not rest** on the skill and wisdom of **our words**, but on the **Word of God confirmed** with **genuine manifestations** “of the **Spirit’s power**.” In other words, the **supernatural gifts** of the Holy Spirit provide Christians in every century with powerful **testimony** to the **reality** of the Gospel we preach.

John 14:11-12 ...at least believe on the evidence of **the miracles** themselves. I tell you the truth, **ANYONE** who has **faith in me** will **do what I** have been doing. He will **do even greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.

Jesus promised that **believers** (not just apostles) may do the works that **He did**, and even **greater**, because He has returned to the Father & **given us His Spirit**. Christ’s **disciples** in the early Church **did indeed** do the works that He had done. They healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, and more. But note that Jesus’ **promise** was not just to the disciples of that first generation, but to “**ANYONE** who has **FAITH IN ME**.” If **you** have **faith in Jesus**, then in His Name **YOU** can heal the sick, cast out demons, etc.

Romans 11:29 God’s **gifts** and his call are **IRREVOCABLE**.

God’s **charisma** are **irrevocable**. The Amplified Bible says: “For God’s **gifts** and His call are **irrevocable** -- He **never withdraws them** when once they are given.”

The Greek word here for “gifts” is **charisma**, from which we derive our English word “**charismatic**.” The Bible is assuring us that the charismatic gifts, the gifts of the Spirit, are **never revoked or withdrawn** when once they have been given.

Hebrews 2:4 **God** also testified to [our great salvation] by **signs**, wonders and various **miracles**, and **gifts of the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect **gift** is **from above**, coming down **from the Father** of the heavenly lights, who **DOES NOT CHANGE** like shifting shadows.

God the Father does **not change**, including in His giving of **spiritual gifts**. He **confirmed** the preached Gospel in the **first** century with “signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” And He who “does **not change**” confirms the same Gospel in the **21st** century with the same **supernatural manifestations**.

Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ is the SAME** yesterday and **TODAY** and forever.

Jesus ministered in power, signs, wonders, and miracles in the first century. And the Bible clearly records Him **empowering** the early **Church** to minister with supernatural manifestations and gifts. Well, Jesus is the “**same...today**.” Jesus has not changed. As in the early Church, **so today He empowers** His followers to minister in the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? After **beginning with the Spirit**, are you now trying to attain your **goal** by human effort?

KJV: Having **begun** in the **Spirit**, are ye now **made perfect** by the **flesh**?

Jesus began His Church in the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**. He will bring His Church **to maturity** and **completion** in the **same power** of the Holy Spirit, **not** by “the **flesh**.”

The early Church was **born** of the **Spirit** and **baptized** in the **Spirit**. They ministered in the **power** of the **Spirit** and manifested the supernatural **gifts** of the **Spirit**. But as Paul notes above, even in the first century there began a **drift away** from living and ministering in the Spirit to living and ministering in “the **flesh**,” that is, by man’s **human** abilities.

Some segments of Christianity in **our day** have made this same error — that is, believing that “**human effort**” can successfully accomplish Christ’s Great Commission. To **correct** this error, Paul called them back to remembrance of their beginnings “**by the Spirit**”. That is my desire in this study — to call the Church back to its **beginnings**, when the **word** of God was preached and **confirmed** in the **power** of the **Holy Spirit** with signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 Love never fails. But where there are **prophecies**, they **will cease**; where there are **tongues**, they will be **stilled**; where there is **KNOWLEDGE**, it will **PASS AWAY**. [9] For we **know in part** and we **prophesy in part**, [10] but **when PERFECTION COMES**, the **imperfect disappears**. [11] When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. [12] Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; **then** we shall **see FACE TO FACE**. **Now I know in part**; **then** I shall **know fully**, even as I am fully known.

This portion of Scripture has been used by some allegedly to prove that the gifts of the Spirit **ceased** at some arbitrary time long ago. In fact,

these verses prove exactly the **opposite!** They are among the New Testament's strongest references to the **continuing validity** of the gifts of the Spirit.

Will prophecies, tongues and knowledge "cease ... be stilled ... [and] pass away"? Certainly. These verses clearly declare that. But the relevant question is **WHEN** and in **what sense?** The answers are clear from the very text itself — that is, in the perfected state that occurs upon the **Second Coming** of Jesus, not before.

Vs. 10 says "...when perfection comes..." As of today, some twenty centuries later, this has **not yet** occurred. **Jesus** is the **Perfect One**. "**Perfection ... comes**" to us at His **Second Coming**, when we see Him "**FACE TO FACE**"! (vs. 12) **Then**, when we see the Perfect One "face to face," tongues will be stilled, prophecies will cease, and knowledge will pass away.

But in **what sense** will they "**cease ... be stilled ... [and] pass away**"? This is a crucially important question. The answer is given in verse 12, using the specific illustration of "**knowledge ... [which vs. 8 says is to] pass away**." Verse 12 shows us that knowledge as we know it now "passes away" **NOT** in the sense of going from **some to none**, but in the sense of going from "know[ing] **IN PART**" (vs. 9) to "know[ing] **FULLY**" (vs. 12).

This well-known portion of Scripture says **nothing** about the **gifts** of the Spirit ceasing in the sense of **disappearing**. The flow of thought, as clearly illustrated in verse 12, is that things that are **partial now** (tongues, prophecy, knowledge...) will go **not** from partiality **to zero**, but from **partiality to FULLNESS**. For the entire Church Age we can expect to "know in part and [to] prophesy in part" (9). Then, at Jesus' Second Coming, "**when PERFECTION COMES, the imperfect disappears**" and that which has been "**in part**" will (verse 12) be brought to **fullness!**

1 Corinthians 1:7-8 Therefore you do **NOT LACK any SPIRITUAL GIFT** as you eagerly **wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed**. He will keep you **strong to the END**, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*underlinings mine*)

Let us close with this Scripture that we examined earlier. Paul wrote to this Corinthian church about the **gifts** of the Holy Spirit (chapter 12). He showed (chapter 13) how they would **continue** during the Church Age in their **partial, incomplete state** and then would be **brought to fullness** at the Second Coming of Christ.

And Paul (ch. 1:7-8 above) clearly encouraged his hearers to **expect** to “**not lack any spiritual gift ... to the end,**” right up to the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And that is my encouragement to the Lord’s Church **today**. **Preach** the **Word** of God. **Teach** the **Word** of God. **Share** the **Word** of God in your personal testimony and witnessing. And **expect** God to **confirm** His word with “**signs, wonders** and various **miracles**, and **gifts of the Holy Spirit**” (Hebrews 2:4).

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