



The Work of the Holy Spirit

By

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Teaching Notes are Bible studies we taught before GraceLife Ministries began publishing articles online in 1995. Some were presented as sermons, others as group studies.

Our hope is that these older studies will be a blessing to you in your life and ministry. Please use them in any way God leads you.

These teaching notes are from an international radio series.

[These notes are from almost 50 years ago.]

Work of the Spirit

A listener from Jamaica recently wrote and said – “As all teenagers, we have problems when we reach this stage. I am living with a Christian family (both parents are saved), but somehow we don’t seem to agree on certain points. Could you please help me? My first problem which I would like you to pray about is to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (that is the gift of speaking in tongues).”

Really what this young listener is asking for is two different ministries of God or he has mistaken the work of the Holy Spirit. That’s because the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not one and the same. In the Dispensation of Law the Holy Spirit came ‘upon’ prophets, kings, and others for a time of specific service. Look up Numbers 11:29 – “And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” In the Age of Grace that we now find ourselves the Holy Spirit is placed ‘within us’ by God. Read John 14:17 – “Even the Spirit of

truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The Greek translations of 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and 1 John 2:27 show that the Holy Spirit takes up permanent resident in our hearts when we are ‘anointed’ with Him.

When does the Spirit of God begin to live ‘in’ you? When you are ‘saved by grace through faith’ in Jesus Christ. At that moment God anoints us with His Spirit, places His Spirit into us, the Holy Spirit baptizes us, placing us into the Body of Christ.

There are some today who believe that speaking in tongues is ‘the’ evidence of salvation and this may be what this young listener is thinking. He explained later in his letter to me that he had been getting all kinds of explanations concerning the matter. Since this does seem to be quite a problem in the church today, I’m going to take out a few minutes of our broadcast to share some insight with you as to the place of tongues in our experience with Christ.

Tongues

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. The Apostle Paul has been dealing with the subject of spiritual gifts in this chapter and asks a series of very interesting questions. “Are all apostles?” Answer – of course not. Only a small number of men had been given the position of being an apostle of Christ. “Are all prophets?” Again the answer is ‘no.’ Only a small number of people were true prophets of God. “Are all teachers?” No – not everyone is a teacher. If they were, who would they teach? “Are all workers of miracles?” No – only a small number of people had the ‘sign’ gift of miracle working. “Have all the gifts of healing?” No – only a small number of people had the ‘sign’ gift of healing. “Do all speak with tongues?” Again, the answer is ‘no.’ God had given a small number of people the ‘sign’ gift of speaking in tongues. “Do all interpret?” No – only a small number of people had been given that gift. Then, why have so many Christians gotten the idea that you ‘have’ to speak in tongues as proof of your salvation?

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 –

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

I don't know how anything could be more plain than that! God gives many different gifts to people – not all the same. If you want to try to take this Scripture and say that everyone is supposed to speak in tongues, then let's go all the way with it and say that every Christian must be a prophet, every Christian must be an apostle, every Christian must heal, every Christian must perform miracles, every Christian must interpret unknown tongues, etc. Do you know anyone who lives up to that? Of course not. Yet, so many people preach and teach that every Christian must speak in tongues as proof of their salvation. My friend, the burden of proof lies with you because the Bible doesn't teach that. What does it teach?

- For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom
- to another the word of knowledge
- To another faith
- to another the gifts of healing
- To another the working of miracles
- to another prophecy
- to another discerning of spirits

- to another divers kinds of tongues
- to another the interpretation of tongues

Do you see that? God gives His gifts for His glory as He wills to different people – ‘to one, to another, to another, to another, to another, to another, to another, to another, to another.’ Each believer receives spiritual gifts as God directs – “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” The gifts are ‘diverse.’ They are not all the same.

Let's just say for a moment that I speak in tongues. Am I getting the best out of my Christian life? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:31 – “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” Is speaking in tongues one of the ‘best’ gifts? Look at verse 28 – “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Notice that the chief gifts are apostleship, prophet, and teacher. ‘Tongues’ are listed last in Paul’s list. If all you have is the gift of tongues, you are in possession of the least gift.

My point is not to ‘put down’ the gift of tongues but simply present it in the same light as the Apostle Paul did to the Corinthian church. Many of the Christians there were very ‘proud’ of their ‘giftedness’ and looked down on people who didn’t have what they had.

Another point I want to make is that I've met many Christians who would give anything to have the gift of 'tongues' – even to the point of 'begging' God for the gift, going to classes to 'learn' how to speak in tongues. I didn't realize that one had to 'beg' God for a spiritual gift. I thought that God gave His gifts "to every man severally as He will." At least that's what the Bible says. Yet, tens of thousands of Christians are taught that they need to beg, plead, and weep for the gift of tongues. Somehow that doesn't fit with what we read in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Maybe it would be good for us to read that portion of Scripture again.

A More Excellent Way

Let's say that you do covet the best spiritual gifts and God gives you the gift of prophecy or teaching (I doubt that you'll get the gift of apostleship unless you've seen the risen Christ and met all of the other requirements for being an apostle). Is that gift God the 'ultimate' in Christianity? Look again at 1 Corinthians 12:31 – "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." Paul is saying here that there is something even better than the gifts of Spirit. What's that? Look at 1 Corinthians 13:1 – "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Let's pretend again that I have the gift of speaking in 'tongues of men and of angels.' Let's pretend for a moment that I have the gift of speaking in every known tongue (language) in the world, plus I can speak the language of angels. Does that make me a spiritual success? Look again at what Paul says – "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling

cymbal.” In other words, if I don’t use my spiritual gift of ‘tongues’ with ‘love,’ I am just a bunch of noise.

Let’s say that I’m a prophet and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have all faith to the point that I can actually remove mountains. Am I a spiritual success? What does Paul say in the next verse? “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Even if I am the greatest preacher who ever lived, and had the greatest amount of faith of any Christian alive or has ever lived, if I don’t have ‘love,’ I am ‘nothing.’ If I don’t preach and teach in love, I am a spiritual ‘zero.’

Paul goes on to write – “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” Christian friend, you can DO and GO and WORK and BE, but if you don’t have a heart full of love for God and others, everything you do will profit you nothing.

It breaks my heart to think that thousands of preachers, deacons, board members, youth directors, Sunday School teachers, choir members, and church members are going to get to Heaven after a life of 'serving' the 'church' only to find out that they don't have any reward because of their 'unloving' spirit through the years.

Summary

Let me briefly summarize what I've been saying. Our young listener who wrote from Kingston, Jamaica, has the 'indwelling' of the Holy Spirit and the 'gifts' of the Holy Spirit confused. You are indwell by the Spirit at the moment you 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.' You receive 'gifts' from the Spirit when He wishes to give them to you. He may give you one, maybe two, maybe more. That's His choice. However, nowhere does the Bible teach that the Holy Spirit gives every Christian every spiritual gift. If you 'desire' spiritual gifts, 'covet earnestly' the 'best gifts' of 1 Corinthians 12:28. But even then, all of the best gifts in the world will never mean a thing if they are not saturated in a love heart and life.

Just in case someone should mistake something I've said in this broadcast, let me say that I do 'not' speak in tongues. That is not a spiritual gift God has given to me. God has been very kind to give me a gift that allows me to share His Word in a way that I pray will bring glory to His Holy Name.

I've shared these thoughts with you in today's broadcast because God loves you and I love you. God wants what's best for you, and so do I.

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