

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



*The supernatural abilities given
to the Church...*

by David Legge

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The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit - Chapter 1

"Are These Gifts For Today?"

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Let's just still our hearts before the Lord. We worship You, Lord Jesus, we magnify You, we just adore You - for You have won the victory. We say 'Alleluia', we praise Your name, because, Lord, there is none like You. The highest place that heaven affords is Yours. We just want to lift up Your name tonight. Lord, we're going to talk about a lot of stuff this evening and the next four weeks, but if we miss You in at all, Lord, we've missed all there is. We just draw near now, and we worship at Your feet, Lord Jesus Christ. We declare that Your name is above every name in heaven and on earth. Your name is far above all principalities and powers, might, and dominion, and every name that has been named in heaven and on earth in this age and that which is to come. Lord, we just declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, and over this moment and in this space, in this place, Lord Jesus, we invite You to come, to rule and reign and have Your way in our lives. Lord, we need You, we desperately need You, and we worship You tonight. We invite You to come, meddle in our affairs, shake us up, Lord, renew our minds, align our spirits and souls into parallel with the plumbline of Your truth. Lord, give us Your mind tonight, let our affections be set on heavenly things and not on earthly things. Lord, if anybody has come in here tonight with their minds already made up in any sense regarding the truths that we're going to consider, Lord - although we're going to reason with people, Lord, we're not here to argue. So we ask You, Lord, to just convince of truth, Holy Spirit, Your job is to convince of truth. I'm not going to try and do Your job, Holy Spirit, so just come and You do what You do best. Lord, have Your way. So we just wait upon You now, we worship You, Lord Jesus. We bless You, we magnify You, You are worthy, You are holy, You're beautiful beyond description, too marvellous for words, too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard. We just love You, Lord, and we pray that You will be glorified tonight, and You will draw near to us. In Your name we pray - everybody said 'Amen'.

OK, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4 and verses 7 and 8. This is just a launching pad for all we're going to look at tonight: *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men'"*. Now Andy and I, when I was invited to come, it was by mutual agreement that this was the subject that I would bring. Tonight in particular, I felt - and we discussed this as well - that it was important, though many of you are perhaps already on the page as far as the question of whether or not the gifts of the Spirit are for today, you might agree with that entirely, but there may be some of you who don't. More likely, there are some of you who are sitting on the fence and not sure - perhaps because you've seen abuses, or maybe received abuses of people ministering in the gifts of the Spirit, so-called, and it has turned you off. Maybe your background has been one where you were taught against this type of truth - and therefore, it's not that you're particularly opposed to it, but you're just not there in as far as convinced that it's all for today.

So I want us to look at this question: 'Are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit for Today?'. Now, first of all, look at this passage of Scripture with me, because the picture that is given

to us is of a military leader returning home at the head of his army after routing the enemy troops. He has taken many prisoners - of course, this is Jesus - 'He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men'. So when He ascended on high, it's as if the Lord Jesus was a Commander who had defeated the realms of darkness at the cross, and He has risen now and He has ascended to heaven, and as He leads into heaven, He has prisoners but He also has spoils of battle that He gives as gifts or tokens of His victory. That's the imagery that is being used here, that these gifts and spoils of battle are the gifts of God's Spirit, or the gifts of Christ to the Church - which is a little bit different, as we'll see later on.

But what I want you to understand at the very outset of tonight and this series is: our focus must be on Jesus Christ, OK? That is where the Father's focus is, and that is where the Spirit's focus is: on Jesus Christ. Before we launch into considering the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit wants you to know that it's all because of Jesus Christ that we have these gifts - because of what He did at the cross, rising again, ascending to heaven, it's because of that that the Holy Spirit has been poured out. Jesus Himself emphasised this in John 7:39, many of you will know verses 38 and 39 of John 7: "He who believes in Me", Jesus says, "as the Scripture has said, out of his heart", his innermost being, "will flow rivers of living water". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive', now listen to this, 'for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified'. Right away there is that connection: the ascension, glorification of Christ, and the outpouring of the Spirit are connected. Again John 14:12, well-known verse, 'Most assuredly, I say to you', Jesus says, 'he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these', listen, 'because I go to My Father'.

Now often we emphasise - and rightly so, because it's a staggering statement, that we will do the works of Jesus, and greater works (whatever that means, probably the extent of the works, and the geography of the works, and all the rest). I don't think anybody is going to do better stuff than Jesus did, but we will be able to do what He did and do it to a greater extent, but we miss this important punchline in the verse: that it's all connected and contingent upon Jesus being glorified because He goes to the Father. Unless He goes to the Father, unless He's sitting at the right hand of Majesty on high, a Prince and a Saviour, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Holy Spirit isn't coming to the earth. So let's not lose Christ in the truths of the Holy Spirit, which I think sometimes happens, it has to be said.

Yet you can't focus on the Holy Spirit without talking about the Holy Spirit, can you? So we're talking about these gifts, and of course the Greek word for 'gifts' is, well, we turn it into English 'charisms' or 'charisma' is the literal Greek word, plural 'charismata' - you may have heard of that term. It's important to understand that, because part of the word is 'charis', that's the Greek word for 'grace'. These are 'grace gifts', these are not things that we work up, or things that we achieve through even experience, though we might hone them that way. It doesn't come through doing a course on anything, this is coming through Jesus, what He has done at the cross, by grace, and we receive it through faith because of Calvary.

Now post-Pentecost, after the Day of Pentecost, God's presence is manifest in the church in at least two ways. Stay with me, OK? There are the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit display God's power. If you like, the fruit of the Spirit depict God's personality: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,

meekness, faith - OK? So in the gifts you've got His power, dynamism; and in the fruit you've got His personality, His characteristics. To put it another way: the gifts are communication, God's communication divinely to us, and the fruit is Divine character. OK, are you with me? You need both, this is how God's manifest presence was displayed in the early church, and it's the way it should happen today. I could take you on a journey through biblical history to show you how the presence of God was manifested in the Garden, it was manifested in the Tabernacle, it was manifested in the Temple. There are various Shekinah incidents, where the manifest dwelling of God comes forth. Of course, it was manifested in Jesus in bodily form: 'We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. The greatest manifestation of God's presence ever was Jesus, but He has not left us without His presence, He has not left us orphans. On the Day of Pentecost that Shekinah Glory was manifest in tongues of fire upon people's head's, a rushing mighty wind, those are figures of the presence of God being near - but that was meant to continue in the church by the gifts of the Spirit, God's power demonstrated, and the fruit of the Spirit, God's personality.

Now, I have heard people say (maybe you have as well), 'The fruit of the Spirit is more important than the gifts of the Spirit'. Has anybody ever heard that? They will say that God is more interested in character than your abilities. Then there are other people, and they mightn't say that, but their emphasis is: 'Well, it's more power that matters rather than your personality' - and sometimes you see that in the shoddy lives of some folk that are claiming to be doing stuff in the name of the Holy Spirit, yes? But it's not either or, it's both and. If you want a true reflection of God's nature on the earth today, we are the church, we're also called not only the Temple of the Holy Spirit, like the Tabernacle and the Temple were in the olden times, but we are called the Body of Christ. We are meant to actually manifest the life of Christ today to this world. If we're going to fully reflect the nature of God, we've got to have His power and His personality - His communication and His character.

Someone put it like this: 'If the gifts without fruit is inadequate, fruit without gifts is ineffective'. So if gifts without fruit is inadequate, fruit without gifts is ineffective. Think about it this way: we believe God is a God of love, isn't that right? That's His character - but what good is a God of love if He can't help us, He's got no power to help us? Power is very important. He is not a whiny God, sitting in the corner with tears dripping down His face, thinking 'Oh, what a terrible situation My people are in, but I can't do anything to help them'. He is the omnipotent God, the all-powerful One. So we need both together, because Christianity is a supernatural way of life - who knows that? It's either supernatural or its superficial - and I hope you've got the supernatural kind. It's not even our life at all, Galatians 2:20, 'It is not I, but Christ who lives in me; the life that I now live I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'. You see, it's the life of Christ Himself, the life of God in us - and the only way to live that life is through His power and through His character. But the tragedy is that we often, as individuals, have divorced the supernatural source from our everyday experience - and that's not only individual, but that is corporate in the church. Much of the church, particularly in Ireland, and here in the UK and in Western Europe, is operating in the flesh rather than the Spirit. Even those who think they are operating in the Spirit, sometimes are not. This is where the gifts come in.

Now Ephesians 4 that we have just read talks about what I categorise as 'the ministry gifts'. If you read on, you will see in verse 10, look at verse 9: 'Now this, 'He

ascended'; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things', now that's worthy of our time, but we need to move on, verse 11, 'And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ'. Now before we move on to the gifts of the Spirit, these are the gifts of Christ - and there is a distinction. There are the ascension gifts of Christ, which are different than the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts of Christ are ministry gifts, and they are not abilities, they are people: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers - some people think pastors and teachers are the same thing, I personally think they could be at times, but they can also be separate - so we call it fivefold ministries. Alright? Apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, teachers - these will be the foundation of the church. Of course, many people think this is only for the apostolic age, they would say, which ended with the death of the apostles - but I beg to differ. In fact, they are necessary, verse 12 says, for the equipping of the saints for works of ministry. Now can I just point out to you that these guys and girls that are given to the church by Jesus Christ were not given to do all the work because you pay them a salary, just in case anybody had that little thought. Look at what verse 12 says - they were given to the church to equip the saints to do the works of ministry. So banish the thought, if it is in there any way in the grey matter, that your minister, or your pastor, or your leaders are paid or in a position - even if they're not paid - they're in a position to do that, that's what they're there for, to do that - no, they are there to train you to do it. So an evangelist is meant to train people to evangelise. A prophet is meant to train people to prophesy. Do you understand? It's to equip you to do the works of ministry.

Unfortunately, not only is this not happening, largely because of a traditional church system that didn't come from God - it didn't come from God, a lot of it came from man - not only are we not equipping the saints, but there is nobody to equip the saints, because we don't even recognise these ministries in the church. I fall into this category - I'll not say which one or two - but what I'm saying is, if you're not a pastor in our culture, you're nothing, in some church cultures you're nothing. Some denominations, if you're not a pastor, you're an evangelist - alright? But if you're not a pastor or an evangelist, like little old me, you're neither of those two, but God has called you - what are you? Because the church, a lot of the church, does not recognise any other positions but pastor and evangelist, and a missionary which is a kind of an evangelist. Do you understand? So we need a complete restructuring, we actually need a reformation in our spiritual leadership - this is a whole other message, I don't want to get on to it - but that's what we need. Listen: where do we start? If we want the manifest presence of God to break out among us, we need - when Moses was building the Tabernacle, God told him to build it according to the pattern that he saw on the Mount - and if we want to see God's life represented here on the earth, in our communities, we can't bypass God's plan for the New Testament Church and think that everything will just fall into place.

So we need apostles - with a small 'a', we might call them 'Small a apostles', but there are small a apostles - there are prophets, there are evangelists, there are pastors, and there are teachers. We need to make way for them, we need to start recognising those gifts, and we need to identify them and commend them in the church. If we want to have the full power of the Holy Spirit in our assemblies, we need to do that. But that's not what you asked me to come here to speak about. Spiritual gifts, or the gifts of the

Holy Spirit, have been categorised probably in about nine - and I don't think they are absolute, OK? I mean, if you go to Romans 12 and a few other portions of the New Testament, you'll find other types of gifts mentioned. I think the nine spiritual gifts, just the way there are nine fruit of the Spirit, they are general to types of giftings. Of course you've got the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, workings of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues. Now don't worry if you're not getting this all down, because we're going to spend time over the weeks looking at each of those to some degree.

But sadly, before we even look at the minutia of definitions and how we understand applications of these gifts, the church is divided over whether or not these actually exist today. Now that's for a number of reasons, not least the abuse of these gifts in certain Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. We have to be honest now, there has been an abuse and misuse of so-called gifts of the Spirit. Many in Christendom have reacted against that, in the classic pendulum swing, by rejecting the whole concept of spiritual gifts for today entirely. That's a shame, and here's the reason why: yes, Satan is in the business of counterfeits - you do know that? I hope you do: 'Be not deceived', that's a statement often made in the New Testament. Jesus said it as well: 'Many will try to deceive you' - so don't be deceived. But listen: you also know, don't you, that there is only ever a counterfeit of the true - do you understand? The devil is not in the business of counterfeiting things that don't exist. Have you ever heard of a counterfeit £30 note? Have you ever heard of one of those? Never! Seriously! Why have you never heard of one of those? There is no such a thing as a real £30 note. Whether it's the New-Age Movement, or the occult, or whatever - you will find that Satan, it's like the magicians in the Pharaoh's court, he's always a step behind, but he's trying to copy what God is doing, he's trying to create his own brand of it - but he only ever counterfeits what is true. So we should be asking as the church: where is the true? So many want to point out the counterfeit - and maybe they are right in some circumstances - but often those that are doing that, sometimes self-appointed spiritual policemen, they are not asking the question: 'Where is the real thing?'. Where is the genuine?

Leonard Ravenhill once said: 'We've been warned of false fire by fireless men, and too often we settle for no fire at all'. It's interesting, because the Corinthians - and we'll be spending a bit of time there over the weeks, there is a great deal of matter about spiritual gifts there - the Corinthian church was a very charismatic church. In other words, it was a church where the gifts of the Spirit were exercised widely, OK? But not only was it very charismatic, it was very problematic, because the gifts were running out of control in this particular church. What I want you to notice is: not once - now mark it - not once did Paul the apostle come to those Christians, who were misusing and abusing spiritual gifts, not once did he say to them 'This is counterfeit'. Not once did he said to them: 'You are being deceived by the devil', and he never ever even implied 'You need to knock this on the head, because in another decade or so this won't be around any more, and you'll have a Bible, and you'll not need these spiritual gifts. So you're getting all uptight about nothing'. No. In fact, what Paul did was, he taught them how to use them, he taught them how to use them even though they abused them. So we might put it like this: he prescribed their use, not proscribed their use.

It's often fear of the false that shuts us down when it comes to spiritual gifts. So we see something we don't like, or we've been involved in something that we've come on

the rough end of somebody who has been working in the flesh and claiming to be speaking on behalf of the Spirit, and we fear that happening again. We fear people moving away from the word of God - but imagine if Paul had had that fear when he was writing to the Corinthians. How different a letter we would have had! He would have been proscribing rather than prescribing. It's obvious, to me anyway, that there is an absence of power in the church today here in Ireland. There is a form of godliness denying the power. The kingdom of God, Scripture says, is not in word, but in power. Do you think it is coincidental that the absence of power is often linked to an aversion to the ministry of the Spirit, and even a disbelief in the gifts of the Spirit? Do you think that's just a chance? I don't think so.

But let's address this before we go on any further into looking at these individual gifts: let's address the question of whether or not these gifts are for today. I want to say categorically and absolutely: there is not one Scripture that says these gifts are not for the church today. So I'm not interested in your theology in the sense of some kind of rational construct that you impose upon Scripture and fit it into that shape, I'm not interested in that. I'm talking about biblical theology now, what the Bible teaches, there is not one verse that says these gifts are not for today. Now that ought to mean something, should it not? Are you still with me here? On the contrary, there are several scriptures that indicate in fact that there will be a continuation of these gifts.

Now I want to take you to those scriptures now, so get your fingers busy and look up your Bible. First of all Acts chapter 2, and of course that's the Pentecost outpouring, the original outpouring of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come, and Peter is preaching this sermon and many are converted - but look at this in verse 39, Peter's trying to explain to them what's happening, and he says 'This is the promise, this is that which was spoken of by Joel the prophet'. But look at verse 39, he specifies to whom this promise will be fulfilled: 'For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off', and that's not geographically afar off, that's afar off in time, 'as many as the Lord our God will call'. Now, are we afar off from Peter on the Day of Pentecost? Yes. Are we called by the Lord - 'to as many as the Lord our God shall call' - are we called by God? I hope you are. It's just another way of talking about being saved and born again. So who is this promise to? Everybody in the future that is called by God! Is that what that says? I think that's clear to me - maybe I'm a bit simple on it, but that satisfies me.

First Thessalonians 5 - that should mean something, shouldn't it, when it was on the Day of Pentecost, when the whole thing started? First Thessalonians 5, remember these are the epistles. Some people say: 'Oh, there is not the emphasis in the epistles on the gifts of the Spirit, etc'. First Thessalonians 5 and verse 19, now this is a command, alright? Do we take the commands of Scripture seriously? We ought to. 'Do not quench the Spirit', that could be rendered 'Do not put out the Spirit's fire'. Now that's what we have made a skill of in churches, putting out the Spirit's fire. 'Do not despise prophecies', there's another emphatic command, did you read that? It means what it says! 'Do not despise prophecies. Test all things' - OK, so there's the balance, you're not to be gullible, you're not to be like a baby. You know the way a baby puts anything in its mouth as it's crawling around the ground, we as Christians are not to be baby Christians who just imbibe everything that is said to be the Holy Spirit. You've to test everything, all things, 'Hold fast what is good' - so there is some good! As well as the counterfeit, there will be some good, 'Abstain from every form of evil'. But Paul is adamant here: 'Don't quench the Spirit, don't despise prophecies'.

Now I just want to ask you: is there anybody here tonight (and obviously I'm not asking for a show of hands) who despises prophecies? If I was to prophesy to you right now, you wouldn't like it - 'Just stick to the word, son. Just stick to the word'. You wouldn't like it, you despise prophecies. Well, you're going against Scripture - Scripture now. Everything I'm going to say to you is from Scripture tonight. Turn with me then to 1 Corinthians, and this is where we will spend a lot of time in the weeks ahead probably - I actually don't know what I'm doing yet, I just about know what I'm doing tonight! But I think we'll end up here, we're bound to - 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 5 first of all. Now Paul is talking about a lot of gifts of the Spirit, but look at what he says, verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 14: 'I wish you all spoke with tongues', I wish you all spoke with tongues - all. Does that say 'all' there? Does 'all' mean 'all'? 'All spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied' - Paul, calm down! People will be talking about you! Now that's Paul's wish. Who is he talking to here? He's talking to the crazy gang, the charismatic nuthouse that was Corinth, who were running away with spiritual gifts. You're saying, 'I know, but he's just about to tell them to calm down'. Yes, he is, but before he does that he wants us 2000 years later to understand that he is not against these things. In fact, he wants them practised within the church.

In fact, in another place, he says 'I speak in tongues more than you all'. Now, that is saying something, when you think that this was out of control - the provision he made is that 'Two or three of you should speak in tongues, and that should be interpreted'. When you're speaking publicly in a message to the church, two or three should be speaking in tongues and it should be interpreted, and no more than that. The inference is that they were all getting up and competing, and trying to be louder than the one beside them. It wasn't them all collectively praising the Lord together, that's not what is being talked about - but people thinking they had a word for the church, and competing with one another. Yet Paul is coming - yes, he does prescribe ways to bring order - but he's saying 'I speak in tongues more than you all', but he also says 'I'd rather speak five words in a known language than 10,000 in an unknown language'. Isn't that right? So Paul, if you would rather speak five words in public in a language you can understand - in other words, for us, English - 'I'd rather speak five words in English', Paul is tantamount to saying, 'than 10,000 words in tongues in public'. So, you ought to be scratching your head and saying 'Well then, Paul, where are you speaking in tongues more than everybody else?'. It's obviously in private, isn't it? But that's for another night.

Look at verses 39 and 40 - and this, by the way, is the conclusion of the matter about spiritual gifts in the Corinthian epistles. He says: 'Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order'. Now he has set down and established the decorum that there should be in the church, he has taught them about the order that there should be in operating the spiritual gifts, but what is his conclusion? Earnestly desire to prophesy, and whatever you do, don't forbid speaking in tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order. What are the 'all things'? All those things that he has been talking about. I know people who go off on one, 'All things decently and in order', and what they have is the decency and the order of a graveyard. If you go to any graveyard, there is decency and order, isn't there? They're all in a straight line, all the headstones and flowers and all the rest - but there is death! But this is a different order than our decency and in order, it can be a bit messy at times as we see from Corinth - and it's a challenge to bring order to it - but we're not, whatever we do, to stamp out the life and

put out the fire of the Spirit. If you go into a maternity ward right now, where your nearest hospital is, you go there and it will be messy, it will be noisy, it will look like chaos, but I can assure you there is order there - but there is also life.

Now, I know - I should have told you this, I suppose, I denied the gifts of the Spirit and I preached against them. That's just an aside there for you, but 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the texts that is often used to say: 'Well, these gifts are not for today'. I want you to turn there, this is sandwiched right in the middle of chapter 12 dealing with spiritual gifts and chapter 14. Chapter 13 is all about love, but it's in the context of spiritual gifts and you've got to see that - and we'll maybe touch on that in further weeks. But look at verse 8: 'Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away'. Has anybody ever heard those verses as a proof text to say that tongues have ceased, prophecies have ceased, and that which is perfect - which they say is the canon of Scripture - when we've got our Bible, the full word of God, we don't need all these what they call 'revelatory gifts'? You've heard that, haven't you?

Well, there are a number of questions we need to ask. There are two points really that I need to make that I think clear this up absolutely. Paul says tongues will cease and prophecy too, but they will not cease until there is perfect knowledge, and we are known as we know in the future - we know as we are known in the future. Now, I believe in the infallibility of Scripture, but I do not believe that we are in a perfect knowledge state right now, and I do not believe that we know even as we are known. I think that we still see through a glass darkly, as Paul says here - would you agree with me? John Wesley, you've heard of him, he said in his commentary on the letter to the Thessalonian church: 'He does not say', that's Paul, 'either that these or any other miracles shall cease till faith and hope shall also cease; till they shall all be swallowed up in the vision of God, and love be all in all' - and he's right.

But what clears it up for me more than that is contextually - do you know that often the questions we have in books of the Bible, you can find the actual answer in the same book if you read it contextually? God has often given the key in the very same book, sometimes it's in the same chapter, but often it's in the same book. Go with me to chapter 1 of Corinthians, at the very start the key is there, verse 4 - now try to assimilate everything that I have told you already: 'I thank my God always concerning you for the grace', what's the word for 'grace'? 'Charis'. 'The grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge' - and what we will see as we look in the weeks ahead is that the gifts of the Spirit could be summed up to an extent in: utterance gifts, spoken gifts and knowledge gifts. So he's talking about these: 'We are enriched by the grace of God in the gifts'. Look, just to prove it, verse 6: 'even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ' - does that sound familiar? 'Prophecy and tongues shall cease when that which is perfect has come, and we know as we are known, and we are no longer seeing through a glass darkly, and hope and faith are gone, and love remains' - what's that? When we see Jesus Christ, when He returns! Paul actually says: 'My prayer is that you would come behind in no gift until Jesus comes' - there's your answer! It's nothing to do with the canon of Scripture, whilst we revere it and cherish it - it's not even mentioned in the context.

So on the contrary, rather than teaching us that these gifts are not for today, Scripture, I believe, is very clear that they are for today. But then people will say: 'Ah, but that's your interpretation, I've got my own - but the great men and women of God in history, Christian history, they didn't need these gifts of the Spirit. The great heroes of the church didn't experience these'. That is false. It depends whose histories you're reading, and how airbrushed they are at times - you know that historians disagree? Did you know that? Because they are selective in their records, and they interpret evidence according to their own persuasion. Further to the contrary of opinions of some, there was not a complete suspension of spiritual gifts in church history. I could keep you long enough - I'm not going to - but you research it yourself. As early as the church fathers, the early church fathers, there is evidence of the use of the gifts of the Spirit. Justin Martyr, AD 100-165; Hermas who died around AD 150; Tertullian, 160-225; Irenaeus, 175-196; even St Augustine, though early in his faith he denied those type of gifts, he believed they died with the apostles, in his later life and his great work 'The City of God', he talks about the miraculous, and he was even used in some of those miracles. So the early church fathers, after the death of the apostles, were not only themselves operating these gifts, they were witnessing to others operating in them in the confines of the church.

We go into the saints of the mediaeval era, and there are groups, individuals and groups, of people - even the Waldenses and others - who were experiencing the miraculous among them. Come to the Reformation, and largely a lot of the reformers were anti-the miraculous, and that was because they saw what they felt was an abuse of the miraculous in Roman Catholicism, linking it to idolatry and all the rest - so they threw out the baby with the bathwater, literally. But even at that, Martin Luther, some of the other reformers, recognised that there were miracles, there were people healed, there were deliverances in answer to prayer. Movements like the French Huguenots, some of you will be of Huguenot descent, they came out of France through persecution - they testified of the miraculous and the gifts of the Spirit in their ranks. Moving forward again into revivalist history, there is great evidence of the gifts of the Spirit in the first Great Awakening and the other awakenings. Jonathan Edwards, who was the great theologian of revival testifies to some very strange things that went on during the Awakening, and yet he believes they were of God - and he put certain litmus tests to them. If you read Jonathan Edwards, you can find that: things that people would be denying today and say are weird manifestations, they embraced as of God. Do you know what the basis of their embracing it was? Fundamentally: not how off the wall in scale the actual phenomenon was, but what was the fruit in the person's life after it - that's the test! That's the test.

Do you know what 'weird' means, by the way? Just as an aside - if you wanted to Google 'weird' there and look it up on your dictionary or whatever - 'weird' actually means 'supernatural'. Did you know that? So I want to be a weird Christian! Maybe you're saying 'You've already achieved that, David, you've done well, you're weird!'. John Wesley I've already mentioned, read his diaries. Read some of the stuff that went on - the gifts of the Spirit in the Awakening, George Whitefield the same, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody - and even, believe it or not, the Calvinistic and generally cessationist (believing that these died out with the apostles) Spurgeon was used several times, publicly, in the use of gifts of the Spirit, particularly the prophetic. David Pawson, in one of his books, talks of Charles Finney, and says: 'An English woman heard Finney pray in an unknown tongue during family devotions; he assured her it

was a special gift God has given him. Behind it lay an experience which he described as follows', I quote, 'I received a mighty baptism in the Holy Ghost... I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart'.

Both in Dallas and London, D.L. Moody - this is recorded, I believe - got up to preach, but found himself speaking to the amazed congregation in a strange tongue. Moody! Only after spending a little time in prayer and praise in this new language was he able to preach again in English. There are other records of smaller meetings of his with young people that broke out speaking in tongues. It even appears (and this would be more my stable, where I come from church-wise a few years ago now), even among the early Brethren, who set up the Lord's Table, and the original vision was that whoever you were, whatever background you came from, whether you were a clergyman or an ordinary man or woman, that you could sit around the Lord's Table equal. When they set that up it was: someone brings a Psalm, someone brings a word, do you understand? Someone brings a song, according to 1 Corinthians 14, but the original men were looking for all the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit to be there - they were!

So, wherever revival took place - do you know what happens? You find God's Spirit power in these special gifts. Wherever God pours out His Spirit - why would you expect it to be any different than Pentecost when He pours out His Spirit again? Now, no doubt these gifts did fall out of use in the mainstream - but the question is: was it due to God's will or was it because of the coldness of the church? Was it because they replaced the administration of the Spirit with man-made tradition and form? It also appears - and Wesley actually remarks on this - that jealousy led to clergy criticising gifts they didn't have themselves. John Wesley says in his diary, Wednesday, August 15 1750, listen: 'The grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was, not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they did not have themselves, and to decry them all, as either madness or imposture'. That's interesting, isn't it?

Now I hope you can see that the Bible actually, rather than denying that these gifts are for today, tells us they are. We should look for them, we should expect them, and we should actually pursue them. History teaches us that wherever God pours out His Spirit, that these gifts are present. Am I saying that we ought to embrace absolutely everything in the name of the Holy Spirit? Far from it! Definitely not! Test the spirits to see whether they be of God. But I am saying that if you want to encounter God, you've got to be honest with Scripture, and you've got to be honest with church history, and be open to everything that God would give you by His Holy Spirit. You cannot encounter His power whilst at the same time resisting the very source of that power, the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

I want to declare tonight, and I hope it's your confession as well: I believe everything the Bible says about the Holy Spirit - everything! I mean, think about it: if all the gifts and resources of heaven were necessary for the first Christians to bed in our faith in the first century, do we as latter-day Christians, who are meant to be bringing in a final harvest in the end time before Jesus returns, are we meant to be less equipped than the early Christians? Are we not meant to have the same power from on high? Did the Holy Spirit bring forth the best wine first? Is that the way the Kingdom works? What way does the Kingdom work? The best wine is kept to the last. So, rather than

the power of the Spirit gradually deteriorating through church history, surely the rule of the Kingdom is to keep the best wine to the last. We are not left the dregs! All that Jesus died to purchase us, all that He rose again and ascended to pour out as gifts to men - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, the nine gifts - they are for us! In fact, it's imperative, if we're going to fulfil the commission, that we have them and we use them.

I didn't look to see when I started, maybe somebody could tell me, I don't know. But let me say this in finishing: I taught against these truths. In fact, if you were to look up (and it doesn't cause me any pride to say this, far from it, embarrassment), if you look up my website and you look at 1 Corinthians, look it up there and there's something wrong - you come to chapter 11, and then it's chapter 15. There's something missing in the middle - it's missing in the middle because I took it off. I took it off because I had to repent, I had to repent, and I repented more than once of what I had taught against, and what I had denied of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

This is how I'm going to close tonight. You might have come here expecting all sorts - and that might happen, I don't know, God knows what He wants to do; but maybe what He wants you to do tonight is repent. You see, the things that we say and the things that we do, they remain as we said and as we do until we un-say and undo them. That's the way the spiritual realm works. It's not enough just to say: 'Oh, no, everything's fine now, I take it or leave it a wee bit, I wouldn't be involved in it, but I'm not against it' - no. If you want to know the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ in your life, and you previously have been in a place of opposition to the gifts of the Spirit - the likelihood is you've spoken against them in some context, even in casual conversation, maybe you have slandered people who have moved or operated in them, or maybe you've just been cynical or sceptical, or by sitting on the fence been apathetic towards them - I've got authority to say this to you, because I've probably repented about this more than any of you in the room: you need to repent if you want to experience the blessings of these gifts, you need to repent.

Will you? 'Oh, that was interesting David, that was interesting' - I'm not interested in being interesting, I'm interested in bringing you to a place where you can experience and taste of this life. This is real stuff. Will you repent? Maybe you didn't even know the gifts of the Spirit existed, but maybe you were in a tradition that denied them. I was not only - don't misunderstand me, I love the background that I have, and I thank God for a grounding in the Word, and I thank God for my spiritual family that I was born into and grew up in, and that disciplined me - I thank God for them, and I honour them. But they didn't believe these things, and I can't fault them because I didn't either! I was under a covering of unbelief regarding it, and I was part of that covering of unbelief - but I want you to understand: even if you've been one of the dumb sheep, you might think, that followed that particular way, you're still responsible. Will you repent? Repent of coming under that teaching, repent of denying anything. You might need to go home and search it all out - it took me a number of years to sort all this out, I'm still learning. I should have a big 'L' plate on me tonight and these weeks, I'm still learning very much. There are others far, far ahead of me - but everything starts when we repent, change our mind, change direction.

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit - Chapter 2

"Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom and Discerning of Spirits"

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Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Let's pray: Father, we want to thank You tonight for Your goodness. Lord, You are - You're good! The Lord is good, His mercy endures forever. Let's just say that: 'The Lord is good, His mercy endures forever'. Lord, what does 'forever' mean, only forever? You're good forever, and Your mercy is forever. We thank You that we come to a God tonight who never ends in mercy and goodness. Lord, Your goodness knows no bounds, it is beyond our comprehension. When we look at Jesus, we realise how good You are. Lord, we just pray for the Spirit of God, Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, to come and reveal Christ to us by the power of the Spirit tonight. We need help in understanding Your word, some of these things are difficult. We just pray that You will come, open our eyes of understanding that we may be enlightened. Lord, we just need You to minister in a very deep way to all our hearts. We pray, Lord, that we will not be talking about You, tonight, and Your Holy Spirit, but actually meet You, and we will experience what it is to be moving under the anointing of the Spirit, and to experience even these gifts of the Spirit in our midst. Lord, I have no plan for tonight, so we just turn it over to You - and whatever You want to do, Lord, we surrender to You. So we wait upon You now in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray - everybody said 'Amen'.

Now, I hope you've got your fingers with you, because you'll be needing them! We're going to be looking at a lot of scriptures tonight, it's a Bible study, isn't it? So we want to study the word of God, and make sure that we lay a biblical foundation. We could launch into this from a thematic perspective alone, because a lot of you are already on the same page, I think, regarding whether or not the gifts of the Spirit are for today - that's what we looked at specifically last week. But it's important that we lay a biblical foundation for everything that we're saying. Tonight we're going to be looking specifically at three gifts of the Spirit, we'll do another three next week, and - God willing, if you still stick with me to the end - we'll do the last three, there are nine mentioned here, we'll do the last three the final night.

So tonight we're looking - and they're not all in order, but I'm clumping them together as I see fit - the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits. OK, so let's look at chapter 12, we're going to read down at least to verse 11 to begin with. Paul writes to the church at Corinth: *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed",* or 'anathema' is the word, *"and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit"* - you know that, don't you? No one can come to faith in Christ except through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries,

but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills".

Now we touched on this a little bit last week, that Paul - as he writes to the church at Corinth, which were a very charismatic church, but we saw also a problematic church in their execution of these gifts of the Spirit - he writes to clear up a few things. Now we see right at the very beginning of this chapter in verse 2: 'You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led'. First of all, Paul wants to clear up the inherited confusion from their pagan backgrounds - their inherited confusion from their pagan backgrounds. In fact, when you look at verse 1, 'Now concerning spiritual gifts' - who in their translation of the Bible, whatever your translation is, who has the word 'gifts' in italics? Put your hand up if the word 'gifts' is in italics - well, it should really be in italics, the reason being: that word is added by the translators. Now, it should be there in the sense that it does give us an understanding of what Paul is talking about, but really as you would be reading it literally in the Greek, it would be 'Now concerning spirituals', 'Now concerning spirituals'. You could translate it 'concerning spiritual things', or 'spiritual phenomena'.

So there is a very generic term being used about spiritual stuff, Paul is saying 'Concerning spirituals, I don't want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to dumb idols, however you were led'. So they had a pagan background in spiritual things, this wasn't new to them. It's a bit like missionaries that go to the East now, or to parts of the world that are animistic where they are engaging in idol worship. You see last week? We wouldn't have to do last week for them - you know, 'Do spiritual things exist in the world today, whether for good or evil?'. They are already sold on that, they believe all that, because they've grown up in an environment where the spiritual realm is very real to them. These guys were the same in Corinth, and Paul is coming and saying: 'Concerning spirituals, spiritual things, you know that you were led to dumb idols'. Now 'dumb' doesn't mean 'duh', 'thick', it means 'dumb' as in 'mute'. 'These gods that you used to worship don't speak', but our God is the God who is, as Francis Schaeffer said, and is not silent. Our God is the God who speaks - I hope you believe that! He speaks today, as He always did speak - now, of course, let me say this, we'll maybe go into this further in subsequent studies, the primary way He speaks is through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the written word of God. Nobody is in any way casting doubt on that to any degree, yet the very book that we celebrate, the written word of God, is what teaches us that God can speak in many and varied ways, including through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So we revere the Bible, and if we believe it's our foundation we have to agree with what it teaches, and it teaches that once, perhaps in our past, we may have worshipped gods that didn't speak, but we have a God who reveals mysteries from heaven. He speaks with the voice that wakes the dead.

Just to apply this to us today, really, what we take out of verse 1 and verse 2 is that we need to all be aware of our backgrounds. That could apply to the teaching that we have imbibed over the years, even since we have become Christians; we need to also

be aware of the experience that we have in our past concerning spiritual things, and how those can relate and bear upon our understanding of spiritual gifts. Yes? For instance, most people in the West have a materialistic background, and that simply means that you have been educated and our culture is such that it is materialistic - i.e. that generally it only considers things to be real if you can see them, if you can touch them, if you can taste them, if the senses can engage with them. So the whole realm of the invisible and the spiritual dimension is not considered real, it's fantasy - that's perhaps our background. Of course, the background of the pagan folk that Paul was writing to, they were probably more superstitious - and you get that as well, where everything is spiritual, you know, nothing can happen that isn't of some spiritual significance, and that's where often you can get into the whole area of divination and getting some kind of 'will of God', or 'the gods', through what is going to happen, even through your tea leaves! Superstition can come through that vein. What Paul is saying is that we have to realise that all of us, no matter how neutral we think we are, all of us have got backgrounds of teaching or experience, good or bad, that have affected how we consider spiritual gifts.

Paul is wanting to establish a broad principle of how to discern spiritual things, how to discern whether something spiritual is of God or not. So he gives us that litmus test in verse 3, you would do well to learn this verse: 'Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed'. Now that should be elementary and obvious to us all, nobody should stand up and say 'Jesus Christ is anathema, cursed of God', that obviously is not from God, is it? No one does that by the Spirit of God, no matter what they claim to have experienced themselves. Equally, the converse of that, 'No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit'. Now that's very specific, but really what you're getting is a broad principle of how to discern spiritual things, and it all comes down to this: does this, what I am witnessing or partaking of or party to, does it glorify the real Jesus? Is it glorifying Jesus, but the real Jesus that we find manifest in flesh on the earth and in the Holy Scripture testified to - because, of course, that's what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do. In John 15 and John 16, 'He will testify of Me, He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you'.

So, if you want to know if something is really of God, or if spiritual gifts are genuine: they will promote not the Holy Spirit as such, or not the person engaging in the gifts, but they will primarily glorify Jesus Christ. True ministry of the Spirit, to put it another way, will be according to the nature of Jesus. Let me repeat that: true ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit, will be according to the nature of Jesus. If it doesn't smell, taste, look like Jesus, it's probably not from Jesus. Verse 3 also would instruct us to not get so obsessed with the gifts that we forget about the Giver. We saw last week in Ephesians 4 that there are the gifts of Christ to the church - apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, teachers - those gifts are people, and I omitted to say to you last week that character is vital for those gifts, because those gifts are people. Do you understand? It's important for apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, teachers to be of a certain character. You go to the pastoral epistles, and you find out the type of people that we're meant to be if we are in any of those categories. Those are the gifts of Christ to the church, but the gifts of the Spirit, by the way, and this is interesting, don't require character. I'm not saying character isn't important, in fact you want to develop your character if you've got gifts. Part of the problem when gifts are abused in the church, in Corinth or modern day Christendom, is when people are operating in gifts, but don't have the character to match their gifts. But the reason why that can

actually exist is because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, they are irrevocable - that means, if God gives gifts, He doesn't necessarily take them back if you mess up. So you could be living in adultery and still operating in spiritual gifts. You could be leading thousands of people to Jesus, but living in sin. You could be engaging in a prophetic ministry, as some people have done, and their life is an absolute mess - they are alcoholics, or living in sexual immorality. This is the reason for this. You might say: 'Well, that doesn't seem right'. Well, if God was waiting for us to be perfect in order to have these gifts, none of us would get them - do you understand?

So we need to recognise that it's about the Giver and not the gifts. We need to glorify the Lord Jesus. So Paul intended to clear up inherited confusion from their pagan background, but I want you to see in verses 4 through to 7: he also wanted to clear up confusion caused by Corinthian disorder, the disorder that was actually going on within this fellowship as they were exercising these gifts. We saw last week that there was a bit of a competitiveness going on, some of them were wanting to be heard over one another - that's why Paul says 'Let only two or three of you speak, one after the other, and there has to be interpretation with tongues'. There was resentment, it would seem, and there seemed to be jealousy among them as to: 'Oh, I don't have the gift he has or she has, and I want that'. Paul is coming in to emphasise, and you've seen this repeated in our reading tonight: it's the same Spirit, it's not about you as individuals, it's about the same Spirit that all of you are operating with - the same Spirit, the same Lord. Look at verse 7, because this is a key verse in the passage, 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all'.

Listen carefully to what I'm going to say: 'charisma' or 'charism' - 'charis' is the Greek word for 'grace', these are 'grace gifts' - they are given by God's grace. Romans 12 verse 6 puts it like this: 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith' - so it's given to us by grace, yes? So you can't be jealous of what somebody else has, because God has given it to them. They have been given a certain grace to minister in that gift, and they have to minister through faith in it; and you've been given a certain grace and gifts to minister a particular way, and you have to minister by faith through it - but it's the same Spirit that gives the grace, it's the same Lord that has gifted it to you. We're not meant to be jealous of each other! We are actually in one body - it's like your head being jealous of your feet, or vice versa, it's ridiculous! This is why Paul is saying: 'Why are you split up like this in division?'. Verse 7: 'works all in all... for the profit of all', look at verse 11, it's the same idea, 'one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills' - He's in charge! So this is not about selfish enjoyment, do you understand?

Now, don't misinterpret what I'm saying, there is a certain satisfaction and pleasure that you get when you're ministering in the Spirit, and doing the will of God, and being fulfilled in the ministry that God has given you. We're not saying that it's got to be hard and excruciatingly difficult, we're not saying that; but we're saying that the chief objective is not so that you get a kick out of it, or people see how wonderful you are - but God has intended that it should not be selfish enjoyment, but for the profit of all. A key word that we will see as we go through these weeks, particularly in chapter 14, is the word 'edification'; that the gifts of the Spirit are for 'edification'. A very basic understanding of the word 'edification' is 'to build up' - they are here to build up the church.

So, to summarise: a worship gathering should lift up the Lord, build up the saints, but not puff up individuals. Did you get that? Lift up the Lord, build up the saints, but not puff up the participants. Yet, there was division in this body. Now, we know there was division from the get-go, if you go to chapter 1 you see that - we'll maybe not read it, but you'll see it there - verse 10: 'I plead with you... that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment'. He goes on to say how he has had reports that there are contentions and divisions among them, some are saying 'I am of Paul', 'I am of Apollos', 'I am of Cephas', 'I am of Christ', and so there is this party, sectarian spirit that has come in. But now, as we come to the portion to do with the gifts of the Spirit, we see that these supernatural giftings are actually - rather than bringing unity - are fuelling division among them, because they're becoming jealous of one another.

So Paul uses the body analogy. He's basically saying that if the members of our body declare independence, we are in big trouble. So, if my leg decides to become independent of the rest of my body, I'm going to be double-minded and going in two different directions, yes? If an organ in my body decides to declare independence, it's going to die, isn't that correct? That's exactly what was happening in this body. Division in the body causes weakness and pain; when, in fact, these gifts were for the purpose of unity and health. So gifts - and this is fundamental, before we get into the nitty-gritty of what they're all about - gifts are not to set you apart for adulation, but gifts are to build one another up and unify us, because we're all part of one body. Look at verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 12: 'For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many'.

Now we're getting to the fundamental level of the operation of spiritual gifts is for edification, and therefore the motivation - the motivation - of the operation of these gifts must be love. Love for Jesus, who is the Body; and love for the members of the body, one another - that has got to be the motivation in seeking the gifts of the Spirit, and using the gifts of the Spirit. Let me remind you, because it is fundamental, of chapter 13 - sandwiched in here between these two technical chapters to do with the gifts of the Spirit, particularly tongues in chapter 14 and prophecy - right in the middle you've got this purple passage on love. Verse 1: 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels', that's the gift of tongues, 'but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy', self-explanatory, 'and understand all mysteries', that's wisdom and knowledge, 'and all knowledge, and though I have all faith', the gift of faith, 'so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing'. Do you understand? Love must be the law by which these gifts operate, love lasts - isn't that what the end of chapter 13 says? Look at the end of it: 'And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love'. Love lasts, and whatever love does will last.

Now we're not to fall into the trap of saying: 'Well, there you go, I just put all this 'gifts of the Spirit' stuff on the shelf, because the most important thing is love'. We saw this last week, you know, where some people will pitch the fruit of the Spirit against the gifts of the Spirit - but no, no, no, that's not the biblical balance. Both-and are

necessary, look at verse 1 of chapter 14: 'Pursue love', the more excellent way is love, 'Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy'. So it's not either-or, it's both-and.

Now you may have picked up verse 13 of chapter 12, and I don't want to look as if I'm ignoring it, where it says: 'By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body'. There is a difference of opinion on the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit, and I'm not going to enter into this - I have my own thoughts on it, but I don't want to enter into it tonight. But I will say this much: whatever your view on the baptism of the Spirit is, whether you believe you're baptised into Christ in the Spirit when you're converted, or whether it's a subsequent experience later on - you might call it by another name, 'the fullness of the Spirit', or 'the sealing of the Spirit', or 'the baptism of the Spirit' - I particularly take Billy Graham's advice on it when he said: 'I don't care what you call it, just get it!'. Yes? Amen? So let's not get into semantics and miss the whole point of the power that we need to live the Christian life. I think the point of verse 13, whatever the doctrine is that we take out of it, is the commonality of the Spirit's immersion of every New Testament believer: that is normal Christianity. That's what they operated under in the Acts of the Apostles, and that's what we are meant to drink from - we're all drinking into one Spirit, the verse says, we're all consuming that one Substance. But I will say this: whatever your view on the baptism of the Spirit is, it doesn't change the facts of these gifts of the Spirit. They don't just all of a sudden fall off the radar if you take a different view of the baptism of the Spirit, they're still here, we've still got to deal with them - what are they?

Let me say - before I launch into the specifics tonight of the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits - that, for some of the gifts of the Spirit, particularly the ones we're going to look at tonight, they are only mentioned once, and they are only mentioned in this passage. So I think we have to be careful when we're interpreting things that are only mentioned once within Scripture. There are, even among those who believe in the gifts of the Spirit, differences of opinion to some degree in how we interpret these gifts. For instance, some see the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge as not miraculous gifts - I'm not saying not supernatural, they are supernatural, but not miraculous; in the sense that God is supernaturally enhancing the knowledge that we have, or the wisdom that we have. They believe that a lot of what is spoken of as words of wisdom and words of knowledge, and claimed to be today, is in fact the gift of prophecy.

Now I'm only saying that because there can be a bit of confusion about these issues that we're going to look at tonight, particularly the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom. But I found it very helpful, something that Derek Prince said, he said: 'Beware of drawing hard fast lines between these gifts'. You remember I mentioned this last week? I don't think these nine gifts of the Spirit are nine specific gifts that start and finish with this list. I believe the spectrum is far greater in the gifts of the Spirit, these are general pinpoints if you like of the kind of gifts that God's Spirit gives. He would agree with that, and says: 'Beware of drawing hard fast lines between these. They are like the colours of the rainbow - violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red - it's easy to discern the different colours in a rainbow, but there is not one single point where you can say, for example, 'Violet ends and indigo begins', or 'Indigo ends and blue begins' - isn't that right? They blend into one another, they are there, but they blend - therefore, we can't always say often 'That's where word of knowledge ends and that's where word of wisdom begins'. There will be times when you might wonder:

'Now, was that a word of knowledge, or a word of wisdom, or a word of prophecy?'. I'm just saying: but don't worry about that - and this is the reason why I'm saying don't worry, because it's all the one and the same Spirit - yes? As long as it's from God, it's not that important to have to categorise and put a label on everything. We are obsessed with that! These are just general descriptions of the 'spirituals', plural, the 'spirituals' - what happens when God's Holy Spirit starts to work and manifest in His operations within the church. So let's not get hung up on terminology, but let's try to recognise biblically what these might look like. OK?

So let's look first of all at 'the word of knowledge'. Now, very simply, the word of knowledge is a small part of God's total knowledge - yes? He's all-knowing, you know that, don't you? Omnipotent. This is just a small part of His knowledge that is supernaturally imparted to us as human beings by the Holy Spirit. So - this is my conviction anyway - when we're talking about the word of knowledge, we're not talking about natural reasoning, it's got nothing to do with your education or any training or experience that you've had. It's under God's control, where He gives you a gift of a knowledge about something supernaturally. It's a bit different from the word of wisdom, as we will see later on - sometimes they're very hard to differentiate - but, if you like, a word of knowledge gives facts, whereas a word of wisdom shows us what to do with those facts. So knowledge equates to facts; wisdom, what to do with the facts.

So let's look biblically at where we can find this, and this is where you need your fingers now, OK? So the first one we want to look at is Jesus, He's the perfect example, isn't He? Before we go on to that, let me just pause for a moment, because I hope you understand this: Jesus was God, yes, He is God, He always shall be God, we believe that; incarnate Deity. Yet Philippians 2 teaches us that when He came into the world, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God - He thought it not something to be grasped at, to use His divine attributes. In other words, He wasn't walking around on the earth like God, He was walking around on the earth like man. He was God, but He didn't pull in His Divine power and attributes to do certain things, we believe He laid those voluntarily aside in order to live totally dependent, as the Son of God, upon Father God. Now that's very important, because a lot of people, when they see Jesus doing wonderful things in the Gospels, they automatically think: 'Well, that's because He was God', or 'that's His Deity'. Now some were signs of His Deity, but generally speaking He was doing what He was doing by faith in the Father. John 5 says He only did what He saw the Father do. He didn't go off on His own volition to do certain things because He was God, He only did what He saw the Father do - so He was listening for the Father's voice.

So He is a perfect example, isn't that right? He said in John 14:12, I quoted it last week: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father'. So what's the pattern of the word of knowledge in the life of Jesus? Well, turn to John chapter 1, and we see it in Nathanael's experience. John chapter 1, Nathanael, some of you will know this passage, others won't be familiar, but you'll get the gist of what we're teaching - verse 47: 'Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!'. OK, so He's looking as if right into his heart, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. 'Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?'. Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you'. Nathanael answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'.
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Now we see right away that this word of knowledge, it produced conviction in Nathanael, and you will see that this is a common fruit of the word of knowledge. People fall before the revelation that the Holy Spirit is giving of themselves, and they are convicted by it. We see it again in Jesus in John chapter 4, a few more chapters, the woman at the well - you remember this one, the Samaritan woman? In verse 15 Jesus has been talking about water that she should drink of, and she will never thirst again; and in verse 15 'The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw'. Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here'. The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband'. Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, 'I have no husband', for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly'. The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet'. That was effectively a word of knowledge, wasn't it? Again, what did it bring? When Jesus said 'You said right that you have no husband, you've had five and you're living with a fellow', it brought conviction to this woman: 'I perceive You are a prophet'. It brings a person - it happened with Nathanael, it happened with the woman at the well - it brings them from the natural to the supernatural. Do you understand? One moment Nathaniel says: 'How do You know me?'; she thinks she's wiping Jesus' eye by saying 'I have no husband', but in that moment of revelation all of a sudden the power of the Holy Spirit, as it were, the conviction of the other world comes upon that individual.

If you go to Acts chapter 5, it's not just reserved to Jesus of course, Acts chapter 5 - you see Peter with Ananias and Sapphira. You know the story? Verse 1: 'But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart' - did you know that Satan can fill the heart of a Christian? I'm just throwing that in in passing. Some of you have read that for years, and you've never actually come to terms with how Satan can fill our hearts when we give ground to him. They kept back some of this money: 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own?' - it was theirs to do with as they pleased, but they lied by making out that they gave everything to God, when they kept back some of the money. It wasn't that they didn't give everything to God that was the problem, it was what they told the church they were doing and they didn't do. 'After it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God' - and, of course, they both subsequently fell down dead in the presence of God as a judgement that brought fear upon all the church. But Peter had a word of knowledge - it wasn't that somebody slipped him a note, you know, in the wee back room, to say 'Ananias and Sapphira have been thieving'. It was the Holy Spirit gave him this word, and look at the result: a supernatural intervention and great fear coming upon the whole church at that time.

See, this is teaching us, isn't it, what Hebrews chapter 4 verse 13 declares: 'There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account'. So when a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom comes forth in the body of Christ, it is showing us that God knows, God sees, His eyes run throughout the earth going to and fro. You can't hide from God. Is there somebody in the meeting tonight, and you are hiding from God - now, you're being ridiculous, and you probably know that, but if I was to say to you tonight (generally

this is not the way it works): 'God could out you, God could'. That's not generally the way those gifts are used, I just want to emphasise that, but here in Acts chapter 5 - it's just to let you know that God knows, to mark your card and let you know: you might be hiding from your wife, you might be hiding from your kids, but God knows.

If you come to Acts chapter 10, you see it again in the life of Peter, this time in the house of Cornelius - a word of knowledge. This is fascinating, Peter has a vision on the housetop, Acts 10 verse 19: 'While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him' - the Spirit speaks, you know - "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them'. Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, 'Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?'. Now this is instructive, for me at least, because sometimes people might hear a word of knowledge and think: 'What was the point of that? Like, what was the point of that, other than showing that you know something about somebody? What was the point of that?'. Well, what was the point of this? The Holy Spirit says to him on the housetop: 'There are three guys at your front door', and he comes down he finds out there are three guys at the front door. Why didn't he just come down and find out there are three guys the front door? Because God wants him to know that 'These three guys at the front door are there from Me' - that's what it's all about: to put this divine stamp on things, to let you know God is on the case. Do you understand? That's what the point is.

There is an element of wisdom with this as well as knowledge, because there was an instruction of what to do - so it's more than just a word of knowledge here, it's a word of wisdom as well, there was something to do. I want you to turn to the chapter before, to chapter 9, because some people get the idea: 'Oh, yes, Jesus did that, and there's Peter doing it, and some other apostles will be doing that - but what about me? Little old me, a Christian just now in the 21st-century?'. Well, if you look at chapter 9, you find out in verse 10 about a guy called Ananias. In verse 10 it says: 'Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias' - note that it doesn't say 'apostle', it doesn't even say 'prophet', it just says 'a certain disciple'. 'And to him the Lord said in a vision' - he had a vision, an ordinary disciple, he gets a vision, God speaks, 'Ananias', He knows his name. 'And he said, 'Here I am, Lord'. So the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight'.

Now, two verses, and look at the amount of information that is in those two verses - it's incredible. The Holy Spirit, through a word of knowledge, actually gives Ananias, an ordinary bog standard disciple, a word of knowledge, and gives the name and address of the place where Paul is staying. Of course, it was a word of wisdom as well, because what did the Holy Spirit say? 'When you find him at that address - he will be there - lay your hands on him that He might receive his sight' - so it wasn't just knowledge, facts, but what to do about the facts - do you understand? I could show you more, I could show you Acts 20, Acts 21 - but we'll not do that, we need to move on. We see that conviction comes through this Holy Spirit gift, yes? It will also confirm something, perhaps, that God has been showing through other means - that's an important thing. It will also, perhaps, prepare us for something that is still to happen - these words of knowledge. OK: conviction, confirming, and preparing us.

Let's move on to the words of wisdom, which is quite similar. Again, just like the word of knowledge, this is a small part of God's wisdom - the all-wise God, the all-knowing God. It's supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit to us, these facts, the knowledge gives the facts, but the wisdom shows us what to do. We see this again in the life of the Lord Jesus - do you remember the great catch of fish? Look at Luke chapter 5, do you remember this? Jesus is a carpenter, remember, and Peter is a skilled fisherman along with a few of the other disciples, OK? 'So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch'. But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing' - and I wonder, subliminally there, was there a little voice 'You're carpenter, I'm a fisherman, I know what I'm doing, You haven't a clue' - but, "nevertheless at Your word" - and that's the key with any word that God is going to give you of knowledge or wisdom, listening to the word of God, and even if it seems totally idiotic, going with it - "At Your word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking'.

The catch of fish, and do you remember what happened to Peter? He is convicted, and he says: 'Depart from me, for I am an evil man!', a wicked man - conviction comes again! But something practical, they got fish out of it - let's not bypass that! There is a practical outcome of this, but something more: there is supernatural guidance, there was a revelation to read of this. This is a word of wisdom, and Jesus teaches them: 'Fear not, for from this time you will catch men'. There is something greater than just an imparting of knowledge, there is wisdom and a revelation coming, taught through this.

Turn to Matthew 21, you remember the borrowed donkey, do you remember that? Verse 1 of Matthew 21: 'Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me". Just pause for a moment, you know, we read these things because we have read them - a lot of us - for a very long time, and we read them oblivious to the reality of what this would actually look like. You know, if I said to you: 'Now, I want you to go up the road there to number 25, and there is a Mercedes sitting there. The car door is open, and the keys are lying in it. I want you to go up there, I want you to sit in, turn the ignition, and drive it down to me' - what would you say? 'And if anybody says to you about the Mercedes, just tell them, 'David Legge needs it!'. That's what the Lord said here, 'If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them' - of course, it's the Lord - but "immediately he will send them'. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying' - and he quotes [Zechariah 9:9]. The only explanation for such a hare-brained suggestion is that God told Him about this - but I want you to note this, I want you to understand: this word of wisdom arose out of Jesus' knowledge of Scripture. He knew [Zechariah 9:9] had to be fulfilled and the word of wisdom came through that.

Now, I cannot emphasise this enough, this is the more sure word of prophecy: if you want to move in the supernatural, you need to get into the word of God. There are a

lot of people, airy fairy folk, floating about, froth and bubble, candy floss Christians who want to move in the supernatural but won't bother their backside to read Scripture at all in the space of a week. It doesn't work like that. Dallas Willard wrote an amazing book on hearing God years ago, he's now with the Lord - and I highly recommend it - but I remember hearing him interviewed. He was asked by a guy who was a young father: 'How do we teach our children how to hear God?'. This really spoke to my heart, he said: 'The best thing you can do to teach your children to hear God, is teach them Bible stories' - because that's how God has spoken to us. Do you know what will happen? He said: 'In later life, when you've sown the seed of the stories of the word of God into their life, the Holy Spirit will take those principles and bring them back to speak to them'. It's the whole basic principle of computing: input-output. If you don't put it in - now the Holy Spirit can give you verses you've never learned, that has happened to me, but that is the exception rather than the rule - don't test the Spirit, but get into the Word.

Acts chapter 8, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, you know that story, don't you? Turn with me to it, Acts chapter 8, you're not getting tired reading the Bible I hope! Acts chapter 8 verse 26: 'Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip' - angels speak, and angels can speak to people. We're not worshipping angels, and we're not looking for them, in one sense, but they can show up and they can speak. He said to Philip: 'Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza'. This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip' - OK, so how do you know when it's an angel, how do you know when it's the Spirit? Well, the Spirit then said to Philip: 'Go near and overtake this chariot' - so it's all in stages here, He doesn't give him the whole story. 'So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'".

Isn't it interesting, it was on the point of obedience that he then knew what to do next. It was at the point of obedience that God then revealed to him what to do next, and sometimes you have to execute these words of wisdom before God shows you any more. But it was through this obedience to a word of wisdom that God opened someone's heart. I'll tell you better than that: it wasn't just the Ethiopian eunuch that came to Jesus, that Ethiopian eunuch went back to Ethiopia - and we know, historically speaking, that he was probably the first preacher of the Gospel in Africa. He brought the Gospel to the African continent through a word of wisdom through Philip the evangelist - that's prophetic evangelism if ever you had it.

Look at Acts 16, Acts 16, words of wisdom can produce open doors. Do you need an open door? I must be the only one needs an open door! Acts 16 verse 6: 'Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia'. Have you ever been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to do anything? Have you ever been forbidden to preach the word by the Holy Spirit? If you said that, people would say 'Oh, the Holy Spirit doesn't forbid people to preach the word' - well, here you have it. Verse 7: 'After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'".

Now this is fascinating, because this word of wisdom opened doors, but it also closed doors. I want you to see that they were prevented from going into Asia by the Holy Spirit, but watch this: later on, Paul was led into a city called Ephesus, which was a chief city of Asia, and he had an incredible experience of many people coming to faith in Christ - that's why you've got the Epistle to the Ephesians. But previously, the Spirit wouldn't let him go there. Here's something: words of wisdom and wisdom from God is all about timing, timing. Ecclesiastes, you know that famous chapter, don't you? Ecclesiastes 3: 'To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven' - and part of words of wisdom is knowing when the time is right, and when you're giving the wisdom about what needs to be done, or receiving the wisdom about what needs to be done, and understanding the timing of that as well. I was reading this week in 2 Chronicles 12 verse 32, about the sons of Issachar, and it says of them 'They had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do'. Do you see it? Understanding to know what Israel ought to do.

So, do you need wisdom? Who of us doesn't? In James chapter 1 verse 5 we read: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to everybody with great liberality, and does not scold' - that's what it literally means - 'does not scold'. In other words, He's not there with a big stick saying 'Oh, you didn't do what you should have done with the wisdom I gave you the last time', He's a gracious loving God with whom there is no shadow of turning, or turning of variableness. We can trust Him, and if you need wisdom - fellowship here tonight - if you need wisdom on how to go into the future, God's got skip-loads of it. You need to go to God, you see that's what we don't do, we don't go to God. We try to work the thing out ourselves by our own ingenuity, that's why you've got churches led by businessmen - and I'm not against businessmen - but often the psyche in the church is 'Oh, he's good at running a business', or 'he's a solicitor', or 'a lawyer', or 'a doctor' or something, 'a teacher - make him an elder'. Now they can make good elders if they are Spirit-filled Christians, and they are gifted in that way, but we often use human wisdom - and that's what Paul had to actually say to the Corinthians, that the wisdom of men is foolishness to God, and the folly of God - I love that - the foolishness of God, did you know God has got foolishness? Now, I know it's an exaggeration, but if I had said that I would've got shot down - but that says it in Scripture: the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men.

So word of knowledge, word of wisdom, we need to go quickly: discerning of the spirits. Let's spend some time on this. What is it to discern? Do you know what 'to discern' means? It basically means 'to distinguish' - so we're talking about the distinguishing between spirits. This is a kind of direct perception from God, where, in the Holy Spirit, we perceive what kind of spirit is in operation. Now, can I just say - and this is a huge subject even in its own - different people perceive in different ways. Some people see more clearly in the Spirit, some people hear in the Spirit, some people feel in the Spirit, some people just get one word or an impression or a compulsion - so it's important to understand that this can operate in different ways with different people; that's why I think it's in the plural, 'discernings', even the word 'discernings' is in the plural, 'discernings of spirits'. There are different ways of discerning these spirits.

But there are generally four types of discernment, OK, or four types of spirits, let's say, that we discern. First of all, there is discerning of the Holy Spirit. Then there is the discerning of angelic spirits. Then there is discerning of the human spirit. Finally, discerning of demonic spirits. So come with me through each of these - discerning of

the Holy Spirit. Do you remember in John chapter 1, you might care to turn to this, John chapter 1, John the Baptist had discernment about who Jesus was? It was because he was forewarned by God, look at verse 29 of John 1: 'The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'. Now, how did he know? 'This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me'. I did not know Him' - now, hold on a wee minute! John the Baptist is categorically saying 'I didn't know Him', 'but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water'. So something happened when he was baptizing with water that told him that Jesus was the Messiah. 'And John bore witness, saying' - this is what happened - "I saw the Spirit", the Holy Spirit, "descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He" - God - "sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God".

Now, has it ever occurred to you that John was the one who saw the Dove light and remain upon Jesus, but the others did not see it? It was a sign to John the Baptist. You may disagree with that, but I think the discernment was given specifically to John and not the others. In Acts chapter 2 this happened in another sense with Peter as he preached at Pentecost, and people were saying: 'These folk are drunk' - they were drunk in the Spirit, obviously - but people thought 'How can they be drunk, it's only 9 o'clock in the morning?'. Obviously they have never come to Ireland! Peter is preaching, and what did he say? 'This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel', Joel 2, and he starts to expound 'Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams, etc, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh'. But 'this is that', that's discernment - because, you look at what happened on the Day of Pentecost, and you'll not find those type of specifics in the Old Testament. But it took discernment for Peter to take that and say: 'This is what was spoken about' - do you understand?

We need discernment to recognise the Holy Spirit's presence. I grew up in - how would I put it? - a church tradition that was very quick to point at things and say 'That could not be the Spirit of God', because it offended their sensibilities and sensitivities. Be very careful, weigh a thing up, even Jonathan Edwards, the great theologian of revival, talked about ways that we could test whether a thing was of the Spirit or not. It wasn't by how ugly and bizarre it looked, that wasn't the test, because some things in the Bible looked really weird, really, really weird - but it was of God.

Can I say: we need to be able, as we meet together, to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit. I remember years ago - it doesn't happen so much now, because I'm not as much in churches with organs - but years ago, I would have finished my message and there would be a sense of God's presence that would just rest on the gathering, and someone would pronounce the benediction, and then they start playing the organ - and the whole sense of God's presence would just disappear because there was no discernment of the presence of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit. Now, you can get that in more, what we might call 'progressive' or 'open to the Spirit' gatherings.

So we need discernment concerning the Holy Spirit. Secondly we need discernment concerning angelic spirits. Come with me to Acts 27 - I know there is a lot to take in tonight, but I'm just giving you both barrels, you must need it! Verse 22 of Acts 27, you remember the boat is about to be shipwrecked, and it says in verse 22: 'And now I

urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar, etc' - basically saying that they would be safe. Now, obviously Paul was the only one that was aware of that angel. I mean, there was a whole crew on board. I'm not saying he didn't see the angel, perhaps he did, but nobody else seemed to see it. So there was a gift of discerning of angelic spirits.

Moving on, the human spirit - remember Jesus to Nathanael, we looked at it earlier, Jesus discerned that there was no deceit found in him. Yet we see Simon Magus in Acts chapter 8, I will quote it to you - Peter says to him, he wanted to pay for to have the power of laying hands on people that they would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he was trying to pay for it, and Peter said: 'Your money perish with you, to hell with you and your money', J.B. Phillips translates it, and he says 'You are bound in iniquity and poisoned by bitterness', and he had that discerning of the human spirit in Simon the Magician to know that that's what his insides were like.

In ministry we need to discern. Some people in ministry, and deliverance ministries, are trying to cast out of people things that aren't demons, it is part of their broken human spirit - and they're trying to cast it out of them, and they're further traumatising people, because they're trying to cast a part of their humanity that needs healing out of them. That's why we need discernment, to know when a problem is a problem of the human spirit, or the mind, or the emotions, or the volition, maybe the demons are all mixed up in it - that could very well be the case, but you can't cast out something of a person, or you're abusing them. So we need discernment of the human spirit.

Finally, discernment of demonic spirits. Do you know there are different types of demonic spirits? Did you know that? In Luke chapter 13 we've got a woman with a spirit of infirmity for many years, 18 years wasn't it, something had happened to her 18 years ago - Jesus cast out the spirit of infirmity. In Acts chapter 16 Paul casts a spirit of divination out of a slave girl who was following him around everywhere, and saying 'These are the great servants of the Living God'. She was telling the truth, but it was a spirit of divination, and he cast it out of her. In Mark 9 there is a spirit of deafness and dumbness, muteness - this is a physical ailment. Do you know there are demonic spirits, sometimes, behind physical conditions? You've even got a spirit of error in 1 John 4.

We've got to have the discernings of spirits in order to be able to differentiate and distinguish what is going on. You've got half of the church saying that what the Holy Spirit is doing is of the devil. They even said that of Jesus, 'It's by Beelzebub that He casts out devils' - they say that about me, they do - 'What spirit is it that he is involved with, that he is doing what he's doing?'. So we've got to be able to distinguish between these spirits.

Do you know, as I bring this to a close, you can grow in discernment? In fact, this is relevant to all the gifts of the Spirit. One more verse I want you to turn to, Hebrews 5 and verse 14, this is very important: 'But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use' - if you underline your Bible, that would be a good phrase to underline - 'by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil'. Are those spiritual senses or physical? Well, there could be a bit of

a crossover between both of them - but, generally speaking, it's talking about the senses that we pick up things in the spiritual, and it might manifest in the physical, you might see, or hear, or feel things, not everybody does - but that's not the point, the point is: by exercising, activating our gifts, by using them, we actually strengthen our senses to discern both good and evil, to discern spirits.

Do you know what the problem is for many of us? We are perfectionists. Unless we can do a thing perfectly, we're not going to step out to do it at all. Can I say to you tonight: no gift of the Spirit is perfect in any Christian in any age. First Corinthians 13 that we read, verse 9 through 10 says: 'We see through a glass darkly' - isn't that right? Therefore, we shouldn't expect a gift to be perfect, or that those who have them can never make a mistake - but we have to have faith to step out, and we have to have safe environments where you can safely step out by faith; and, if you get a thing wrong, not get completely lambasted or destroyed for it.

Now, I'm finished. Word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernings of spirits. You might not have any of those, or you may have experienced some of them from time to time - but these gifts are for all of us, so why not ask Him? We will see this in future weeks: earnestly desire the gifts, pursue love, but also the gifts. Will you, now, ask the Lord for what you need? Not for your own gratification - what this fellowship needs. When Paul says 'Earnestly desire the best gifts', he was speaking to the whole fellowship. What does this fellowship need? What is this fellowship lacking? Is it lacking discernment? Is it lacking wisdom at the moment? Is it lacking knowledge? We could go into the other gifts: is it lacking in administration, what is it lacking? Well, it's not about criticising the leadership, and saying 'Oh, you need to...', it's about saying 'Lord, we need this'. What about you standing up and saying: 'Lord, maybe You want to give me those gifts to fulfil that ministry, to plug that gap' - He is the one who gives the gifts, because He is the Head of the church.

Let's pray. I want us to take a moment or two in the presence of God. Now, I know that was an awful lot, I gave you a tsunami of stuff there - but get the recording and go over it. It is important, it really is important, and it's all generally saying - look, it's not complicated - it's just saying: there are the gifts word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits, and they're all in the Bible. That's basically tonight summed up: they are all in the Bible, it's all there, and you need to be open to it - that's basically it.

So, are you? Are you? Are you open to receive? Most people are open to receive a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom - most people. Some people think: 'Oh, please don't come near me', and there are other people where it's like the wee kid in school 'Pick me! Pick me! Please, pick me!', you know? But here's one: are you willing to give a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom? That's a different thing. Who doesn't want one, but are you willing to give it if God should impart something to you? Are you willing?

Let's take a moment to pray, and I want you to engage with God - whatever you have heard from God tonight, whatever He's calling you to do, your availability to the body. Maybe you need to repent about resenting people who are gifted, and you don't feel gifted? Resenting them and their operation of the gifts - you maybe need to repent of that, knowing that God has got gifts for you too. You need to get over yourself, and start moving in what God has for you. Stop trying to copy someone, or being resentful

of their gifts, but actually realise: you're unique, you're one-of-a-kind, and God has stuff for you that He wants to do through you that He can't do through anybody else. So maybe some of you need to repent, maybe you need to forgive people - remember we said no gift is perfect, and nobody will operate perfectly in a gift - maybe you need to forgive somebody who has operated in a wrong way in gifts of the Spirit. It's not that the gift necessarily was bad, but maybe they didn't just execute it correctly, and it has hurt you, it has damaged you. Maybe you were shut down by someone because you didn't operate a gift particularly with the etiquette that they thought you should, and that has hurt you, that has closed you down. We need order, OK, so we're going to be talking about that, there has to be order, and we have to be able to be open to be instructed in those gifts - maybe you have got offence in you because you felt that you tried to do something, and it was shut down.

You need to forgive, and you need to move on. It's bigger than you - have you ever got that memo from God? It's not about you, it's not about you! It's about Jesus! It's about His body, the church, it's not about you.

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit - Chapter 3
**"Faith, Gifts of Healings and
Workings of Miracles"**

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It's good to see you all, it's great to be with you, I'm really enjoying my time here and I feel very much at home. Thank you for your welcome and reception of God's Word. I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, where we were last week. It has been great to be here, and I really sense that these are very strategic meetings for you and for me in some respects - and it's good to journey with you in this regard. I do apologise to a degree for the amount of stuff each night, with hindsight we're probably packing too much in each night - because we could almost take one night on each of these gifts of the Spirit to do it justice. What we're going to consider tonight, I mean, we could take a whole series on healing, for instance, on its own. So, just bearing that in mind, it's quite a cursory dealing with some of these things - but certainly it's an introduction, and for some of you it will be the first time you're hearing some of this truth.

Let's pray together before we launch into what we're looking at tonight. I want you to pray with me now - would you pray, and enter into prayer with me that God will come? Now, I believe God is going to do some stuff tonight - really I do - in our gathering. Because of the subject we're dealing with, I believe He's going to come in, and He's going to sovereignly move in our midst. So let's prepare ourselves for that, and whatever that means for you, just humble yourself before the Lord and open yourself for God to minister to you.

Let's pray: Father, we thank You for Jesus, we thank You that in Jesus we have a full and perfect revelation of Your heart. We've just been worshipping Him, and we want to reiterate that: there is no one like Him, there is no one like Him. He is the fairest of ten thousand, He's the altogether lovely One, He is the darling of our hearts, He is our Beloved. We thank You that He brings us to You, Father. We thank You for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Promise of the Father and the Son, who would testify of Jesus. Lord Jesus, just as You testified of the Father, the Holy Spirit testifies of You and the Father. We thank You that, Holy Spirit, You bring the Father and the Son and Yourself to us to dwell with us, to abide with us and within us. Holy Spirit, we want You to come tonight and bring God in such a remarkable, extravagant way to each of us and to our gathering tonight. Lord, deliver us from talking about these things and not experiencing them. So we just pray, Lord, for Your power to be evident tonight, and Your grace. We pray for a stillness upon the gathering, a focus in all of our hearts, and, Lord, give us the understanding that we need, and I the help that I desperately need. We ask all these things in the Name that is above every name, Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

OK, week one if you were here - I apologise if you'll have to do a bit of catch up, but we've got the recordings here, you can get them at a later date - but we looked in a bit of an introduction at the question of whether or not these gifts of the Spirit are for

today. I think that was necessary, because there is so much conflicting information that is going about in the church today (particularly in our land) concerning this, that we needed to deal with that. I'm not going to repeat any of that tonight, get the recording - but we spent a whole evening considering that from both a biblical and a historic perspective. Last week we launched into chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, and we gave the context - which, again, I will not repeat - of this chapter and the Corinthian situation, their background, the chaos that was going on within the church. Then we began to tiptoe into the actual nine described gifts here in this chapter. We looked at the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and discernings of spirits - so if you need to know what those are, do get the recordings.

Tonight we're going to look at the gift of faith, the gifts of healings, and the workings of miracles. So let's read a couple of verses from chapter 12 - we'll not read everything like we did last week - but let's just launch into verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 12. Paul is talking about the various manifestations of the Spirit, it's the one Spirit but He manifests His presence and work through these different capabilities, supernatural capabilities. Verse 9: *"to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles"*, and we'll stop there. Go down to verse 28: *"God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues"* - and we'll end our reading there.

You'll remember, if you were here last week, I said that the list of the gifts of the Spirit that we have here is not an absolute exhaustive list. You have other lists in the book of Romans, some in the book of Ephesians, and they are not absolutes in the sense that these are the only types of gifts that the Spirit gives. I think they are general areas of the Spirit's administration and operation. We also highlighted the fact that there aren't clear distinctions between each of these gifts. Do you remember the illustration about the rainbow? No? The colours of the rainbow looked rather distinct from a distance, but actually when you home in on them they tend to blend together, and it's hard to distinguish between the colours in the spectrum. It's the same with these gifts. We highlighted last week that sometimes we might hear a word of knowledge, but in fact it's also a word of wisdom because there is guidance and instruction being given through it. We might even wonder: 'Well, that's maybe a bit of prophecy there as well?', so is it a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or a word of prophecy, or maybe all three?

Tonight is going to be similar, there is overlap, as we will see, in the way healings sometimes merge into miracles. In other words, healings in the Bible could be considered miracles, but not all miracles are healings. Are you with me? Then we will see that the gift of faith is intrinsic to healings and miracles, faith is necessary as a gift. So healings, miracles, merge with faith as well. So Paul, while he is being helpful to us, and essentially he's just telling us: 'This is the one thing'. The whole passage is about the one thing, what is the one thing? The operation of the Spirit in the church - it's the one thing, but manifest in different ways. He's trying his best to distinguish them, but in a sense they are very hard to distinguish.

So let's look tonight at faith, gifts of healings, and workings of miracles. I hope, again, you've got your index finger and thumb with you, because we will try - we'll maybe not be looking at as many scriptures, but I will be referring too many of them. If you can take notes that would be really good, because you certainly will not imbibe everything

that I share with you tonight.

First of all: faith. Now we all know, I hope, that there is faith for salvation, there is faith in order to have our sins forgiven, receive eternal life, and be born again. Ephesians 2 verse 8 is very clear: it is by grace we are saved through faith, it's not of works, it's not of ourselves. So grace, if you like, is a free gift, God's hand giving us forgiveness; but faith is a bit like our hand receiving it, where we take God at His word and we enter into this new life in Christ. So that's faith for salvation, but that's not what is being spoken of here regarding the gift, the supernatural spiritual gift of faith. There is also a deposit of faith, Romans 12 talks about this in verse 3: 'God has dealt to each one a measure of faith'. So God has deposited in each of us different levels of faith - that doesn't mean someone is better than another at all, and it doesn't mean you can't progress in the level of faith. You take what God has given you - it's a bit like the talents to a degree, you know the parable of the talents - you take what God has given you, you invest it, you use it, and you seek more and you will get more. We know that from Hebrews 11 verse 6: 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'. So if you get inspired tonight in hearing about the gift of faith, well, come and get it! Everything is here for the taking through Jesus, but some of us have been given starter-level faith that is a bit more than others.

That's not what is being talked about here in the gift of faith, this is something else. There is saving faith, there is faith that is deposited in each of us, there is the pursuit of more faith - then there is another faith that is mentioned in Galatians chapter 5. We're looking at the gifts of the Spirit, but there you have the fruit of the Spirit, and one of the expressions of the fruit of the Spirit is faith - but actually the Greek word means essentially 'faithfulness' or 'dependability' or 'trustworthiness'. That's talking more about something to do with our virtue rather than something that God gives us, although we get it through the supernatural workings of the Spirit in our lives. Remember that the fruit of the Spirit is the characteristics, the personality of God; whereas the gifts of the Spirit is the power and expression of God in that sense.

That's not what we're talking about tonight, we're talking about the gift of the Spirit, the supernatural gift of miraculous faith. It's like the other gifts, an impartation that comes directly from God. It's under God's control, and it's not done at our will. You cannot switch it on and off, it doesn't come through human volition. Turn with me to Mark chapter 11 till I establish this through the teaching and works of our Lord Himself. Mark 11, beginning to read at verse 12, and this is the account of the cursing of the fig tree - Mark 11:12: 'Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it', He's looking for fruit. 'When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again'. And His disciples heard it'. Now go down to verse 20: 'Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away'. So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God'. Now literally, in your margin, and your Bible might actually read this, that could be translated 'Have the faith of God' - remember that. Now look down at verse 23: 'For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever

things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'.

Now, let's just look at this for a moment: God's faith, this miraculous, supernatural gift of faith, is actually an impartation of God's faith. It is expressed, the spiritual gift is expressed in our words when we speak the word of faith and, when we do that, what we are saying is as authoritative as if God Himself had spoken those words. Did you get that? So much so that Jesus says here in verse 23 that whoever says to this mountain, or whoever asks in faith, will have whatever - so there is a whoever-whatever connection. Whoever - isn't that good news? Whoever receives this impartation of faith can speak out whatever God has given faith for, and you will have it - I mean, that's just a guarantee. There are no ifs, buts, question-marks about this. It's not a blank cheque, but it's whenever this spiritual gift engages within us, and God imparts His own faith, it's going to happen. But the condition is to have the faith of God. I would call this not only miraculous faith, but mountain-moving faith. In fact, there is an allusion to this in 1 Corinthians 13, you know the great passage on love; where, if you look down at verse 2, he's going through all the different gifts that we might have, and he's saying that if we are without love we're nothing - but he mentions: 'and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing'. So he's actually referencing the fact that this gift of faith is the faith to move mountains, to say to the mountain 'Move' and it moves, because God has imparted His own faith to you.

So, connected with the gift of faith is the word of faith. 'Whoever', Jesus says, 'says to this mountain'. Now, that's what Jesus taught about the faith of God, but when we actually look at His example - remember we said that He is our pattern, He is our example - and we look at how He operated in faith, we see that He spoke, He spoke in faith, the word of faith that God had imparted to Him. Let me give you a number of examples, you may want to jot this down. In Luke chapter 7 you have the resurrection, if you want to use that term, of the widow of Nain's son. It says in Luke 7:14 that Jesus touched the open coffin and He said, listen: 'Young man, I say to you, arise'. I want you to note a pattern here: whenever Jesus raised people from the dead, He spoke to the dead body - that had to be faith, yes? This dead body can't hear, it can't receive, it's dead, but He speaks to the dead people. Then we see it in Jairus' daughter in Luke chapter 8, the next chapter. He goes into that house, He tells them: 'Don't weep, she is not dead, she sleeps' - and they laugh at Him. He puts out the mourners - we'll see this pattern tonight, He puts out unbelief - and He says: 'Little girl, arise'. He speaks to the 12-year-old girl, and it says her spirit returns to her, and He tells them to go and get her something to eat. Again, He speaks the word of faith to the one that is dead.

Then, of course, you'll be familiar with Lazarus in John chapter 11 and verse 43. Jesus prays to God first of all, before the stone is rolled away, and He asks the stone to be rolled away and then and a loud voice, it says, He cries: 'Lazarus, come forth!'. He addresses the corpse again - that's the word of faith. It wasn't just unique to Jesus, we see it in the life of Peter the apostle as well. In Acts chapter 9 verse 40, again in relation to a dead person, this time Dorcas, otherwise named Tabitha; we read there that again, it's interesting, Peter follows the pattern of Jesus, he puts the mourners out, he puts out unbelief. In other words, people who are saying the opposite of what is the reality in God's mind, and what is being imparted to the apostle. You see the apostle had imparted to him what God said was the reality, whereas the mourners were just seeing the reality of a dead person - who can blame them? Then Peter turns

to the body, that's literally what it says, turns to the body and says: 'Tabitha, arise', and she rises.

Now there was not one iota of possibility that that would not happen, because the word of faith had been given by God, the gift of faith - do you understand? We can't just walk into mortuaries and tell dead bodies to come back to life, some people try that - I'm not against it, I'm just saying we haven't the guarantee that it's going to happen when we do that - but there were absolute guarantees here, because God had imparted His own faith.

There are even words of judgement that come through faith. Do you remember in Cyprus Paul encountered Elymas the sorcerer? Turn with me to Acts chapter 13 for a moment, verse 8. Now this is a most uncommon use, I would say, of the gift of faith, but nevertheless it's there - but it's not a warrant for us to go around doing this to people, I hope you know. 'But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith' - the proconsul was going to be converted, and he was coming to interfere in a devilish way. 'Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time'. And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord'.

Now some people say Paul was overstepping the mark here, and he shouldn't have done what he did - but I would show you verse 9 again. It says he was filled with the Holy Spirit when he did this; and also verse 12, the result was that the proconsul believed. Again, that's a very exceptional, I would say, use of this - you have to really know you're walking in the Spirit to do things like that! But here's the whole point: the gift of faith is a supernatural gift, where God imparts divine faith, and we speak forth the same results as if God had spoken directly Himself. Now listen: if God wants us to, we can have power over creation, over death itself, and over the devil. If you want that supernatural faith it's available - however, what I would say is: if you're wanting to take steps toward pursuing this, first of all saturate your whole being in the word of God. There are a lot of people in the church who are wanting to move in the supernatural, particularly in the gifts of the Spirit, but they haven't got the wherewithal to lift their Bible throughout the week to read what God says. Romans 10 verse 17 says: 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'. You need to get into the word of God, that's all I'll say - pursue that gift, but you need to get into the word of God, you need to know the mind of God, you need your mind transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. But do you know where the mind of God is displayed? Within His word. If you want to think like God thinks, and know what He wants, you need to get into His word.

So that's the gift of faith, and that's important for what we're going to look at now - because the next two gifts are built on that foundation: gifts of healings and workings of miracles. Now let's look at gifts of healings. Now this is a very superficial dealing as I hinted, because it's a massive subject. First of all, let's consider: why is this needed? Why is the gift of healing needed? Well, that's obvious, isn't it? Sickness! But why is sickness here? This must be established before we go on any further: sickness is a

result of the fall. Do you understand? When man fell into sin. I'm not saying your sickness is because of something you did that's wrong - it might be, but it's not always of course - but all brokenness in creation comes from the fall into sin. So illness and disease are out-workings of a curse that has come through sin over all mankind, and it eventually will lead to physical death.

Of course, all Christians believe that Christ redeemed us from the curse when He died on the cross, there is no dispute there among believers. Isaiah 53 verse 5 says: 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement', or the punishment, 'for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed'. Now Isaiah 53 verse 5 refers to both physical and spiritual healing, and I think all Christians are agreed on that. They differ on the application of it, but they agree that ultimately, because of the cross, we will be healed spirit, soul, and body one day. Peter the apostle applies this phrase in Isaiah 53:5, 'By His stripes we are healed', to spiritual healing in 1 Peter 2 verse 24. Let me read that to you: 'Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed'. So it definitely applies to salvation, healing of the soul and the spirit. But in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8 verses 16 and 17, Matthew quotes Isaiah 53:5 in reference to physical healings that Jesus has performed. Matthew 8:16-17, just listen: 'When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demonpossessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses''.

OK, so Peter is applying it to spiritual healing, Matthew is applying it to physical healing. Now, I used to argue that Matthew's case showed that the fulfilment was in Jesus and His ministry, OK? That the physical element of healing was in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, but He fulfilled it then and that's it done - we don't need it now. But that's wrong, because that completely ignores all the material on healing after Jesus, in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, that reference it to the New Testament Church, such as the gifts of healings. But all Christians probably agree that Christ purchased complete freedom from sin at the cross and from sickness as well, but the question of contention is: when does this come to fruition? When can we know this healing?

Now, again, everyone is agreed that all the benefits will not come until Jesus returns again. Because we know, we know from this book of Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15, that it will not be until we have our resurrection bodies that this mortal, this corruptible will put on immortality and incorruption. So, what then do we make of the gifts of healings, how do we understand it? Well, we may not have our resurrection bodies yet, but what we do have is resurrection life in our bodies. Romans 8:11 says: 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you'. Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, you might want to jot it down, Paul talking of his own experience says he was: 'always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus', so he's physically suffering for his faith, 'that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you'. So what he's saying is: 'What I'm suffering from Jesus is killing my body, but I have resurrection life in me that is being manifested, irrespective of what's happening to my body'.

Now, surely one of the ways that this resurrection life is manifested is through healing and health. So, here we're getting the balance of the teaching of the word of God - there is a 'now, but not yet' aspect to God's kingdom, a 'now, but not yet'. In other words, we do not yet have our resurrection bodies; we do not yet have perfect healing and health, yes? But there is also a 'now' element to the kingdom of God where we can experience, from time to time, God imparting, through gifts of healing, a foretaste, or you might say a down payment, of healing that He's going to grant is completely in the future. Do you understand? Now, but not yet.

Of course, we see healing in the ministry of Jesus, we see it in the ministry of the apostles, we see it in the healings in the church age that testify that this is part of the New Covenant blessing. It all shows us that God wills to heal people. Now please allow that to sink into your mind and heart, because that is a huge question for many people: does God want to heal? Is it God's will to heal? Jesus frequently healed all who came to Him, and He never turned anybody away and said: 'It's not your time', or 'It's not God's will to heal you, I'm sorry', or 'God has more for you to learn through this suffering, you haven't learned your lesson yet'. He didn't say that once. There was a leper that came to Him in Matthew chapter 8, and he said: 'If You are willing, You can make me clean', and Jesus said 'I am willing, be made clean'.

Of course, Jesus is the express image of God's Person, isn't He? He's the Word of God, He speaks God's mind and heart, and so Jesus shows us that God desires to heal people. Does that mean all will be healed? No, it doesn't, and this is where we must be sensitive - never to say 'God always heals everyone today', or especially never say 'If you had enough faith, you would be healed' - that's a terrible thing to say to anybody! Even during the apostolic age, not everybody was healed, I could give you examples: Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:27 wasn't healed, eventually he was, but he wasn't healed for a long time; Timothy had to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, he didn't get healed of that, there and then anyway; and 2 Timothy 4:20 we read of Trophimus who was left sick in Miletus by the apostle. So not everybody gets healed, not everyone will be healed when we pray for healing, just the same way that not everybody is saved when we pray that they will be - but is it God's will that any should perish? No. It doesn't prevent you praying for people's salvation, just because everybody is not saved, does it? I hope not! Equally, we ought to persevere in praying for the sick, even though we don't always see everybody healed.

We've got Scripture for this. Jesus taught us to pray: 'Deliver us from evil', isn't that right? In 3 John 2, that little Epistle, John says: 'Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers'. So here is an individual whose soul was very healthy, but their body obviously was sick - and John is saying: 'My prayer is that your body will catch up with your soul, and your body will be in health just as your soul is'. So we have warrant to pray for that, surely. It's not just healing that is being spoken of there, is it? It's health, that's a different thing. Psalm 103:5 talks about our youth being renewed like the eagle's - and I know some of you need that, don't you, tonight? Imagine that! Remember Moses, Deuteronomy 34 verse 7 says 'Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigour diminished'. Do you know why I think that was? Because he spent so much time in the immediate presence of God that he lived in a different atmosphere, he breathed different air - this is before Jesus on the cross, you know. Health in the presence of God.

Is it God's will that we should be healed? What do you do when you're sick? I hope you pray, but what is probably the first or second thing that you do when you're sick? Paracetamol? Go to the doctor! Why do you go to the doctor? Because you want to be well, you have an innate understanding that God made you - even the body, is it not the case, the body heals itself, or at least tries to most of the time, it has that capacity which betrays the Divine intent that we should know health and healing. So you go to the doctor because you believe you need to be well.

Now, a common objection that people will raise is: 'Well, OK, if you believe that you can have this gifts of healings today' - and I used to say this - 'why don't you all go up to the hospital and heal everybody?' Go down to the hospice to those poor people who are dying and go and heal them!'. That shows a complete ignorance about this gift and how it operates, and indeed all the gifts of the Spirit. You see that the phrase is in the plural, 'gifts of healings'. Now that can mean that there are different kinds of healing gifts, there is no doubt about that. There is not just physical healing, we know that, don't we? There is emotional, mental, spiritual healing, and there is deliverance which also comes into the category of healing. But it doesn't just mean there are a variety of types of gifts of healing, it also means that each time a healing occurs it is a 'charism', it is a gift of God, it's a grace gift. Every time it happens it's because God has imparted supernaturally His gift of healing in that moment. It's not the case that people own this gift personally, and they can go around just healing anybody. There may be people who are used by God in certain areas of healing, I'm not disputing that, but all I'm saying is - as we cited at the beginning - this is not something that you do at will, just like the gift of faith. It's not something that you do at will, it's a gift from God.

Do you remember John chapter 5? There is a man there lying by the pool at Bethesda, and that pool was a place, supposedly, of healing - whether you believe the story or not, that an angel came down, rippled the waters, and if you got in the pool quick enough you would be healed. So it was littered, literally littered with people with ailments and diseases and paralysis. There is one man there that was lying there 38 years, and Jesus goes into that vicinity with all those sick people around, and He goes to the one man, and He says to him - I'd love to see his thoughts hearing this - 'Do you want to be healed?'. 'I'm lying here 38 years, what do You think?' - but the Lord Jesus was touching something that that man was ignorant of, that there had become a resignation in his condition. He had resigned himself to the fact that everybody was going to beat him into that pool, and he was never going to be healed. But I want you to understand something - there are so many lessons in that story, but it says there was a great multitude of sick there, but Jesus only healed one, isn't that right? Now we know He healed everybody that came to Him, it would appear; but on that occasion He only healed one. The comment in chapter 5 of John, verse 19, that helps us understand that - I'll read it in the New Living Translation: 'So Jesus explained, 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does''.

We cited this last week, Jesus did nothing independently of the Father. He did not walk around independently as the Son of God doing stuff through His divine attributes, but He only did what He saw the Father do. That day, the Father was healing that man, and that's all Jesus did. This is where we need to get to: it's like the gift of faith, it comes from God, so we need to be hearing the word of faith. These gifts of healing come from God, so we need to be seeing what the Father is doing, hearing what the

Father's will is. We can't do anything without the Father's direction.

Now, there were many unconventional methods that Jesus used when He healed people. Again, that is, I believe, partly to illustrate that He was totally relying on the Spirit. Sometimes He put clay on blind eyes, and He spat and made mud paste, rubbed it on eyes. He even spat and touched somebody's tongue that was dumb - yuck! I mean, seriously, let's read this in a real way, it's bizarre! In the natural, it seems ridiculous. In His healing dealings, He varied His approach - why do you think that was? Well, I don't know the whole reason, but I do think it was so that we would avoid formula and realise that this is God, and we need to be doing whatever God is telling us at any given moment. Most commonly, we believe, and I can show you this but we haven't time, most commonly Jesus laid hands on people to heal them - but there were other times that people touched Him, and we read that virtue or healing power went out of Jesus almost in an involuntary way. Sometimes we even have the account that the atmosphere of where Jesus was holding a gathering of teaching was permeated with healing power, you remember Luke 5 and verse 17, that 'the power of the Lord was present there to heal them'. This is not reserved to Jesus, because when we go to the Acts of the Apostles chapter 5, we read that even Peter the apostle's shadow was cast upon sick people and they were healed. That was not because of anything superstitious about Peter's shadow, it was because of the One who overshadowed Peter - the Healer Himself.

So what we're saying is, ultimately - and we could, as I say, take a series on the gifts of healings - but ultimately it's God's power, isn't it? Yet, with the gift of faith it's the same, yet John 14:12 'the works that I do you will do; and greater works than those'. So we can't stand back and say: 'Oh, well, it's God does it, so there's nothing for me to do', Jesus said to the disciples, Luke 10:10, 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out demons'. It comes from God, but there is responsibility on us to do it because Jesus has said: 'Go in My name, and everything that I have taught you, do'.

He even instructed the disciples to anoint with oil for healing, a lot of people don't know that - Mark 6:13. They go straightaway to James 5 where it says: 'If any of you are sick, let him call for the elders of the church', and they say only elders can anoint with oil - and they seldom do it, in my own experience. Some of them refuse to do it because they don't believe in it. But it's not reserved to elders of the church, they can do it because they're in a position of spiritual authority, but it's not reserved to them. If you go to Mark chapter 6:13, the disciples were sent out to anoint with oil for healing. Even in James chapter 5, if you look at verse 16 in the same context, do you know what it says? 'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed' - so there you have it, to everyone. Mark 16:17-18: 'These signs will follow those who believe' - not just apostles, not just Jesus, but these signs will follow those who believe - 'In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover'. That's believing believers, by the way, believing believers who believe what God says.

So there is the gift of faith, the gifts of healings, and following on from what we have just understood there is the workings of miracles. Again, please note that this gift is referred to in the plural. Again, it's a double plural: workings, in the original 'workings of miracles'. Now there are many miracles in the New Testament that were healings, but Paul here in this list actually separates the workings of miracles as a gift from the

gifts of healings. Now, why is that? Well, in the context he must have something other than physical healing in view when he's talking about the workings of miracles. When we actually look at the Greek word for 'miracles' here, it's the Greek word 'dunamis' or 'dynamis', it literally is translated 'power'. So the NIV translates this gift 'miraculous powers' in verse 10, the New American Standard Bible in the margin translates verse 10 and verse 28 'works of power'. So really, what this gift is is any activity where God's mighty power is displayed. It's not reserved just to healing.

The word 'dynamis' is used in Matthew 13:54, which reads of the crowd: 'They were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man', Jesus, 'get this wisdom and these mighty works?' - that's the word 'dynamis', 'works of power'. Now we could talk about them, but we don't have time - the water being turned into wine, the first sign in John's Gospel; we could talk about the feeding of the 5000, besides women and children, in John 6, another sign. Peter, when he was preaching on the Day of Pentecost, refers to the works of power by Jesus in Acts 2:22. He said: 'Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles', works of power, dunamis, 'wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know'. These works of power testified to who Jesus was and the message that He preached. Often these works of power used of deliverance from danger, even the casting out of demons. In fact, Derek Prince says that almost every time you find this expression of works of power, there is some kind of casting out of demons happening somewhere.

Ultimately, the purpose of these works of power, like all the gifts of the Spirit, are what? To glorify God - isn't that right? But I want you to understand that these works of dunamis power are attesting signs - we saw that from what Peter said at Pentecost - but often people will say they attest to the authenticity of the Gospel, 'These are signs to attest to the Gospel'. But I actually believe more than that, that these are not just signs that attest to the Gospel, but they are part of the Gospel - I'll explain that. The Gospel means 'good news', doesn't it? God is not doing these mighty power acts just to show 'I am who I say I am, and My message is true', but God is doing good things to help people, and He's showing that He's a good God and He's interested in people and He loves them - it's part of the message.

The Jews, of course, would never acknowledge a prophet who did not do supernatural signs, works of power. We know that the signs of an apostle include these miracles, 2 Corinthians 12:12: 'Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds' - 2 Corinthians 12:12, the mighty deeds are the 'dunamis', the acts of power. Let me explain this for a moment: miracles are of a slightly different order than healing, OK? Miracles are slightly different, they are of a higher order than healing. Go back with me to 1 Corinthians 12 for a moment, verse 28 that we read at the very beginning, 1 Corinthians 12:28, there's a bit of an order here: 'God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings'. It seems that miracles, acts of power, are of a higher order. Healing can be gradual, do you believe that? Do you? Often healing can be a process, you know, especially inner healing. Healing can be imperceptible, we can pray for someone tonight and you'll not know for a while until you've been healed - it's not always obvious. But a miracle usually is instantaneous, it happens in a moment and it's obvious, everybody can see it.

So there is that difference - but also, think of this, you cannot heal something that isn't there. Do you understand? So you've something wrong with you, that's why you've come for the healing, but when God does a creative miracle and puts something there that wasn't there to begin with, that's a work of power, that's a miracle, do you understand? Healing might be fixing something that's broken, a miracle can be creating something that doesn't exist.

But we're going full circle now, and I know we've covered an awful lot of ground, but we are actually returning again to this fundamental issue of faith regarding healing and regarding works of miracles. Now I want you to turn with me - and I'm bringing it all to a conclusion now - to Galatians chapter 3, I want you to go there with me, Galatians chapter 3. Let me explain the context of this Epistle before we read these verses. They were believing another gospel, a group called Judaisers came in who were trying to convince these Gentiles that they needed to become pseudo-Jews, keep the laws, regulations, dietary laws, rituals, even be circumcised - and so the gospel they were preaching was Christ-plus good works and Judaism. Paul accuses them of following another Christ and believing another gospel. OK, so this is a church that's in serious error, and they're now trying to live their Christian life through legalism - do you understand? Trying to earn favour with God through performance, keeping rules, rather than living by grace and in the power of the Spirit. There is also rife immorality in their ranks, and if you want to know about that you read chapter 5 and you'll see the works of the flesh being demonstrated there. By the way, there's some instruction for you: if you live your Christian life in the flesh, you're only going to aggravate the bad flesh, you must be walking in the Spirit.

So this is the context, and yet look at what Paul says in verse 2 of chapter 3: 'This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. By grace are you saved through...? Faith! So he's saying to them: 'How did you come to know Jesus? How were you saved? Was it through works? No, it was by faith'. Verse 3: 'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'. So you got saved by faith through the Spirit's work, but you're trying to perfect your salvation and sanctification by works. Verse 4: 'Have you suffered so many things in vain; if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. This is staggering to me, because - I used to, I suppose, believe this, I'm eating a lot of humble pie, aren't I? I used to think everybody had to have everything doctrinally right before God would show up and do anything - and here's a church in heresy, and God is still working miracles among them. Now, you just think about that for a moment. It's the Bible, don't argue with me, it's there - but notice what the key was of their salvation and of the miracles that are being performed among them, the phrase is repeated in verse 2 and in verse 5: 'The hearing of faith'. Yes? Hearing from God, what the mind and heart of Father is!

You study the miracles of the Bible, and you will find that almost every time there is an act of faith that triggers the miracle - whether it's a healing, or a deliverance, or an act of power, there is faith that triggers it. Take healing, for instance: sometimes it's the faith of the sick person, you see it in Luke chapter 8:48, Luke 17:19, you see that sometimes it's the faith. Sometimes the apostles see faith in someone, they can actually see the faith in them through discerning. But then there are other times that it's the faith of the people bringing the sick person, you remember Mark chapter 2 verse 5, you remember the four guys who bring their friend and put him through,

probably, Peter's rooftop - I'm sure he wasn't too happy about that! Lay the person down, the paralysed man at Jesus' feet, because the room was so crowded that was the only way they could get him in - and Jesus healed the man because of the faith of the friends. What an encouragement to bring people in prayer, to stand in place for people who don't even have faith themselves.

We see people coming to Jesus for faith on behalf of others, the Syrophenian woman came for her daughter; the centurion came for his servant - and Jesus, so impressed by both their faith, lauded them as having greater faith than the Jews. James, remember we cited in James chapter 5: 'Anyone sick, let him call for the elders', and the passage goes on to say 'and the prayer of faith will save the sick' - that's the faith of the elders. You see where I'm going with this?

Jesus, when He was in Nazareth, it says, if you go with me to Mark chapter 6 - you remember that was His hometown, you know that, don't you? Do you remember what He said? Let's read the context, because I think this is actually important - I think there's a word here, because I wasn't planning to say this, there is a word here. So He's in His hometown, look at verse 1: 'Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things?' - you see, they know Him from He was knee-high. 'And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!' - so they know about the works and acts of power. 'Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house' - and that's the word of the Lord for someone, so you pick it up, someone here tonight in Magherafelt. 'Now He could do no mighty work there', that's 'dunamis', 'except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching'.

Do you see what's happening here? He could do some healings - we would all take that, wouldn't we? - but He was restricted to just doing a few healings, but no mighty work. Why do you think? Unbelief, the atmosphere of unbelief cancelled out, even in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, what He could have potentially done if there had been faith! Go to chapter 7 of Mark verse 31: 'Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'. Immediately his ears were opened'.

Now why did He take him aside from the multitude? Well, perhaps because He didn't want to make a spectacle of this man who was deaf and dumb - but could it be because of the unbelief of the crowd? Could it be that they were just testing Him? Look at chapter 8 again, chapter 8 of this Gospel and verse 22 - a blind man is healed at Bethsaida: 'Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town'. Jesus, You don't half waste time! What did You need to do that for? You're

the Son of God, just heal him! 'He led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking'. Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, 'Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town''.

Do you see it? Unbelief. Do you know the atmosphere of this place in here, you folk - I love you all, lovely people - but the atmosphere that you create can cancel out what God wants to do. It's just a fact, I'm not accusing you of anything, it's just a fact. Jesus prayed twice for this man, it's interesting, isn't it? First of all, maybe He was just teaching us a lesson - that, you know, it's OK to pray more than once. I used to say: 'Look, you've prayed for that, and it hasn't happened - it's because the gift is dead, it died with the apostles, wise up. Stop keeping praying with people, why, if it's the power of God, and gifts of healing, why do you have to keep praying?'. Jesus prayed twice for this man! Alright? So I can pray 22 times if I like with someone - maybe my faith is too weak, maybe it needs to strengthen, maybe I need to take more risks - but the bottom line is this: faith is the catalyst for everything in the Christian life. This Christian life is from faith to faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. That which is not of faith is sin. Wow!

So healings merge with miracles. Miracles are instantaneous and visible, even when they are healings. Miracles are instantaneous and visible, even when healings are gradual and imperceptible - but healings and miracles, both in that spectrum of the rainbow, merge with faith. Faith is the pigment permeated through it all. So do you want the supernatural? 'Oh, yes, please!' - if you want that, you must have faith, you must take risks and not doubt.

Now I know there is a lot to take in there tonight, an awful lot - but don't worry if you didn't get it all. Can I just say as a caveat and disclaimer: believing in the gifts of healings does not mean that you don't go to the doctor or you don't take medicine. We believe in prayer, and we believe in going to God first before anything else, yes; not relying on medicine and doctors over and above God as Asa did in the Bible - but it's both, and. Luke was a doctor. The prophet Isaiah told Hezekiah that he would be healed, he wouldn't die as was going to happen, but he would be healed and live another 15 years - but he also instructed him to go and get a poultice of figs and put it on a boil that he had. So it was both and, both and. If God leads you a certain way, not to go a certain direction, that's between you and God - but don't tell other people to do it or require it of them. But when doctors cannot heal, and medicine has no answer, Jesus is able. There is a mystery in the will of God, I'm not going to lie to you - I don't know why everybody we pray with doesn't get healed, but some of them do, I don't know why that is; but I believe that because of what I've dispensed to you tonight, specifically this area of truth, I believe that God is giving gifts of faith now, I believe He's giving gifts of healing now, and I have to believe that He can do acts and demonstrations of power in our midst. The question is: do you believe that? Do you believe that?

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit - Chapter 4

"Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues"

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Let's pray, and I just want you to pray briefly that the Lord will speak to you. Father, we thank You for what we have received, and for what we're about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Come, Holy Spirit, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 12. We're going to read quite a long passage of Scripture, it's necessary as we look today at "Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues". So, we're going to read chapter 12 verse 10, and then we're going to drop down to verse 27. OK, so 12:10: *"to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues"*. Down to verse 27 then: *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way"*.

Then you've got this passage on love, the more excellent way. Chapter 14, now we're going to read the whole chapter, OK? So hang in there with me! Chapter 14 verse 1: *"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding."*

I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. In the law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me' says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints". We go down now to verse 36: "Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. Therefore", and these are Paul's closing words on this matter of spiritual gifts, "brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order".

Let me just give you a quote before we go on any further. In the midst of everything that God is doing regarding spiritual gifts, this is one I came across by R. Loren Sandford during the week, and I think it's apt: "If the goal is to be supernatural, you will end up shipwrecked; but if the goal is intimacy with Jesus, you will end up supernatural". I think that's marvellous. It summarizes some of what I said in my first week. If you're just joining us for the first this week, there's going to be an awful lot of concentration on tongues interpretation, but it'd be good for you to hear that introduction - just so everything can be in the context of pursuit of Jesus. It's all about Jesus. Let's, in the midst of what God is pouring out among you here in The Journey [Church], not miss the Giver for focusing on the gifts. Alright?

Now, this is how we have sort of categorized these gifts, it's not perfect - I've explained why previously, I'll not do that just now. There's overlap with all these gifts, but we have tried to categorize them into vocal gifts, revelation gifts, power gifts. Last week I was with you, we looked at power gifts, the week before revelation gifts. The power gifts being: faith, healing, miracles; revelation gifts: word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits. But these next two weeks, we're looking at the vocal gifts - specifically this week: tongues and interpretation of tongues; and next week:

prophecy. This is the point - and again, this was a foundation that I laid on our first introductory week, that the gifts of the Spirit are all about edification. We find this word repeated over and over again in these three chapters, particularly 12 and 14.

To 'edify' means 'to build up'. If gifts are happening in the church, as they were in Corinth, but people were not benefiting from them, that's not the purpose of them and why the Holy Spirit gives them. This week in particular, we're seeing that edification comes from mutual understanding. Specifically in the area of tongues, if people don't understand anything that's being said in a public capacity, they can't be built up. So edification comes from mutual understanding - and whilst a person, if you look at verse 4 of chapter 14, can edify themselves speaking in tongues; look at the verse: 'He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself', the purpose of the gifts being used publicly - that's an important emphasis, as we'll see later - the importance of the gift of tongues being used publicly, and any gift in the church publicly used, is to edify, corporate edification.

So look at verse 28 of chapter 14: 'If there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God'. Verse 16, look at verses 16 and 17: 'Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit', so that's speaking in tongues, 'how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified'. So, in a public capacity, if there is tongue-speaking as a message to the church, but no interpreter, it's useless - it's a waste of time, because understanding is necessary for edification. Keep that principle in mind.

So edification doesn't happen, if everybody's doing their own thing. So what Paul is doing in this passage is, he's teaching order and procedure. You've got to appreciate that these Corinthians were highly charismatic and also, because of that, they knew what tongues and interpretation and prophecy were. So we have to play catch-up a little bit, and ask some more basic questions. So, in the time we have, I want to go into depth into this portion of Scripture, and hopefully it will be a help to you. First of all, we're looking at the gift of speaking in tongues or kinds of tongues, various tongues.

Now in biblical history, if we go right back to the book of Genesis, we find in chapter 11 that the whole earth was one and they were of one speech. Then, you know what happened, they exalted themselves and wanted to become like gods and reach heaven. They built the Tower of Babel, and in Genesis 11:6-7 we read that the Lord saw that the people were one, their language was one, and they began to do things and would not be restrained. And the Lord said, 'I'm going to come down, and confound or confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech'.

So, fast forward into the New Testament Church, and there's this gift of tongues - and surely it's redemptive, as a sign of the reversal of everything that happened at the Tower of Babel. Going right forward from this day into the book of Revelation, we see what will happen when every tongue, every tribe, and every nation will come together to worship the Lamb in Heaven. It's a foretaste, is it not, of the unity of language in Heaven. Yet here on Earth, at this particular time - we saw this principle, 'Now and not yet', that's the kingdom of God - so we don't get perfect healing now, but there's little deposits, foretastes of it now that God gives when His Kingdom comes to earth. In the

same sense, the gift of tongues is not perfect; at certain times it's given in partial ways. All the gifts, as we saw from chapter 13 verse 9: we know in part, we prophesy in part, they're all imperfect - and they're all imperfectly exercised. This is even a two-step process, this gift of tongues: the speaking has to be interpreted, but it's still an improvement on Babel, isn't it? It still gives us a kind of touch of what it's going to be one day in the consummation of the Kingdom of God in Heaven.

The first time we find tongues in the New Testament is in Acts chapter 2 - you might want to turn there for a moment - on the day of Pentecost. We read there in verse 4: 'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance'. Now the miracle was the speaking in tongues, it wasn't the hearing, as some people say. If you look at verse 11, you see that there were various people - verse 9 through 10 and 11, and it says, 'We hear', these different nations all there for Pentecost Feast, they're all Jews but from different areas, 'We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God'. The miracle was not that they heard their own language, the miracle was that the other people were speaking it.

They heard the mighty works of God in their own language. Now surely this is symbolic, at the very beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, of how the gospel is going to be taken to the four corners of the world. In fact, this is what begins to unfold in Acts chapter 8 - you find Holy Spirit, chapter 2, is poured out on the Jews; chapter 8, on the Samaritans; chapter 10, upon the Gentiles in Cornelius' house; and chapter 19, upon the Ephesians, a group of Gentiles who were a little bit left behind - but on all those occasions of the baptism of the Spirit in Acts chapters 2, 8, 10 and 19, there was speaking of tongues, except in chapter 8. OK, so speaking tongues in chapter 2 among the Jews, chapter 10 among the Gentiles, chapter 19 among the Ephesian Gentiles; and in chapter 8 tongues isn't mentioned, but something took place that impressed Simon the Magician when the Holy Spirit came after the laying on of the hands of the apostles - so there was some demonstrative evidence that the Holy Spirit had come upon these people, that Simon wanted and he was prepared to give money for. So I suggest to you that it probably was tongues, although we don't have explicit evidence for that. So that's where we have to be very careful about making rules about the gifts of the Spirit. Laying on of hands happened on two of those occasions of those four baptisms of the Spirit; but on two of the occasions the Spirit sovereignly came. It's like the healings that have been here over the weeks: some people received it after laying on hands, with some people it was sovereign. So let's not make too many rules.

On the basis of Acts chapter 2, some people say tongues must always be known languages. The reason why they say that is, the Greek word for tongues is 'glossa', and it essentially means 'languages', and that's how the reader would have understood that word 'glossa'. 'Tongues' is a wee bit more of a strange term, isn't it? It's literally 'languages', but I ask you the question: what other word would Paul have used for this phenomena? Other material indicates that this is often - it can be ordinary languages as it was in Acts 2, but often, more often perhaps, it's something more than mere languages. Look at chapter 14 verse 2 quickly: 'He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him'. At times, in tongue-speaking, no-one understands except God.

So, this seems to be, in verse 2 of chapter 14, more about prayer, rather than preaching the mighty works of God. When you think about it, it would probably be very

rare in the New Testament early church for unbelievers of other nationalities to be in the gathering. Of course, think about what Paul has already said in our reading, Paul actually discourages people from speaking in tongues without interpretation when unbelievers are there. So if it was the case - and follow with me, I know I'm going quick, but try and stick in there - if tongues was to be in ordinary world languages, so that foreign people would understand, why is Paul saying: 'Don't speak in it when there are unbelievers there, even foreigners, and you always need an interpreter'? It appears to be a contradiction, but it's not, of course. It's probably showing a distinction in certain kinds - remember the plural is there in the gift, kinds of tongues speaking.

If you look at verse 18 of chapter 14: 'I thank my God', Paul says, 'I speak with tongues more than you all'. Why would Paul be speaking known languages in private where there's no one to listen or to receive it? Listen: just because tongues is known languages once in the Bible in Acts chapter 2, it doesn't mean it always is a known language. Some people use Acts chapter 2 as a blueprint for tongues-speaking - but I have to warn you about that, because there's certain unique things that happened in Acts 2 that never happened again. Tongues of fire came upon their heads. We don't know of that ever happening again. I'm not saying it can't happen. I'm just saying that it happened in Acts 2, but, as far as we know, never again when the people were speaking in tongues. They were all speaking together at once. Yet, Paul says in Corinthians 'only two or three at the most, and then there has to be quietness' - but they were speaking in unison. That may allow us in praise and in various prayer contexts to speak in tongues together without interpretation - when it's not a message to the church.

The instruction in Corinth is: not as many can speak at once, but only two or three. Acts is also an historic record of the first account of speaking in tongues, whereas Corinthians is an explicit teaching: how it was to be exercised in the church many years after Acts chapter 2. So I give you a question: should Acts 2 regulate tongue-speaking in the church today, or should Corinthians 12 and 14? Which should be regulative? Now think about this for a moment: in Corinth, Paul actually says the opposite of what happened at Pentecost. Paul says, 'This is what should happen in a church, all should not speak, and the people should know what is said - but if they don't have an interpreter, they won't know what it said'. Whereas, in Acts 2 it says, 'All spoke, and everybody knew what was being said'.

Now don't get me wrong, tongues can certainly be human languages, but there's more to it than that. As I've said, the gift is kinds, various, diverse tongues. It's the same word we get 'genus' from, so the different genres of tongues is a hint to us. Also verse 1 of chapter 13, this love passage, Paul says, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels' - I think that's a nod and a wink to the fact that there are global tongues, known languages, but there are also these angelic type of spiritual tongues that only God understands.

So what are we saying? Verse 2 of chapter 14 says that certain tongue-speaking is speaking to God and not to men, and we speak mysteries - that's what it says - that no-one understands. Verses 11 and 14 talk about the spirit praying without understanding, the spirit animated by the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 14 of chapter 14: 'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful' - that actually, when you're speaking in tongues, it bypasses, the Holy Spirit bypasses your understanding and your mind. Can I say: that is absolutely, utterly absurd to

intellectually-driven Christianity! They just can't get that because, as far as they're concerned, everything must filter through the brain. But you see, tongue-speaking and all the gifts of the Spirit produce humility in those who will receive them.

So what we're talking about in certain tongues, if it's not speaking known languages, it is essentially a form of praise or prayer spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker. Did you get that? A form of praise or prayer spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker. It can be exhortation, but if it's public in the body as a word of exhortation, it has to be interpreted. Now let me ask a couple of questions and seek to answer them.

Is there a difference between public and private tongue-speaking? I've alluded to this already. If you look at chapter 12 and verse 10, it talks about all these gifts of the Spirit, and at the end it speaks of tongues and interpretation of tongues. You look at verse 28, it talks about various gifted people and it ends with variety of tongues. There seems to be an order of importance there. So, Paul is teaching that in public, there are different kinds of ministry to the assembly in public. Look at these, what are often seen as problem verses, verse 29, chapter 12, verses 29 to 30: 'Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?'. The inference there is 'No, they don't all' - so many have concluded that not everyone can have the gift of tongues or have these other gifts. But the strange thing is in verse 5 of chapter 14, Paul says, 'I wish you all spoke with tongues'. Strange, isn't it? If not all do it? Look at verse 23, this may give us a clue to this conundrum: 'Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place and all speak with tongues', was this happening? 'And there come in those who are uninformed, unbelievers, etc, and they don't understand what you're saying' - but he's saying, 'If this happens, where you all speak with tongues', look at verse 26, 'How is it then, brethren, whenever you come together, each of you has a Psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, each of you has a tongue, a revelation and interpretation?'

So what's going on? I think chapter 12, those latter verses, are telling us what should not be happening. Certainly not all are prophets, etc, but with regard to tongues - because he says, 'I wish you all spoke with tongues', and this is actually what's happening, and what shouldn't happen, there should be two or three speaking, not all of you. Rather Paul is saying: 'In public - private is one thing, speak in tongues to your heart's content and it will edify you, that's what I do', Paul says, 'but when you're in public, there should be only two or three at the most, and then there has to be interpretation' - but he's not saying that only certain people can have this gift, that's my opinion.

Second question: is tongue-speaking something that happens to you out of your own control? Some people say that it's a kind of ecstatic experience, where God zaps you, and you're kind of forced to speak in this unknown language. Well, even the disciples, on the day of Pentecost, were able to stop their tongue-speaking when Peter began to preach. In verses 27 and 28 of chapter 14, you see Paul says, 'Two or three speak, and if someone else starts speaking, the first person needs to stop'. Now if you're to speak in turn, how could that happen if it's not under your control? Look at verse 32 of chapter 14, Paul says: 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets' - now, I know that's about prophecy, but there's a principle here. It seems to indicate that we have the ability to restrain the moving of the Spirit in our spirit. After all, one of the fruit of the Spirit is what? Self-control.

The other six gifts of the Spirit, other than the vocal gifts, the initiative appears to belong more with God, OK? The gifts we've been looking at, God dispenses the gift - but, even in that, the human will has to cooperate. Didn't we see that? There has to be faith, there has to be a risk, there has to be stepping out with miracles. Even with knowledge and wisdom, we have to speak it out and be faithful to what God has imparted. But, especially in the vocal gifts, tongues, interpretation and prophecy, we seem to be more in control of those. God gives the intuition. God gives the animation, but we must speak it out.

Another question many people have out of fear is: what about demonic counterfeits? What if it's not from God, this tongue? What if it's from the devil? What if it's a divided tongue, a serpent's tongue? There's no doubt, there are demonic tongues - but the enemy always counterfeits the true. Do you remember I taught you that? By the way, the Corinthians, they had been big into idolatry in their past, there was demonization among them. You can see that in chapter 10 and verse 20. Some of them were sitting at the table of demons and the table of the Lord. Yet Paul says to them in verse 5 of chapter 14, 'I wish that you all spoke with tongues', so he wasn't worried about them getting something that wasn't from God. There are demonic counterfeits of God's gifts. Yes, some people's gifting can take them further than their character - that's why Jesus said in Matthew 7 and verse 22: 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Did we not prophesy in Your name, cast out demons and do miracles?' - and the Lord will say, 'I never knew you', because they practice lawlessness. That's a whole subject on its own. But that does not discount the genuine nature of the gifts that God gives.

The regulation of these gifts is what we found in chapter 12 and verse 3: 'Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit'. In other words, it's the fruit of a person's life. If the Lordship of Jesus is there, that determines whether their gifting is genuinely of God. But I'll tell you this: fear never motivated Paul in teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, so why should it motivate us?

In a pagan context, where there were abuses of these charismatic gifts, Paul did not use fear and ever say, 'Be careful what your lives are like, be careful what gifts you receive, because it might be from demons'. He never did that, because his confidence was in God - even when these Corinthian Christians were behaving in immoral ways because, 1 John 4:4 says 'Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world'. Luke 11 teaches us that if we come to God and ask Him for good gifts, He doesn't give us serpents and scorpions and stones that will harm us; He gives us the things that will nourish us and cause us to thrive. He's a better Father than we are.

Let's move on to interpretation of tongues. Verse 5 of chapter 14, Paul says in the second half of the verse: 'For he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification'. So, think about this: tongues is valueless in a public capacity, when there's a message being given in tongues, unless there is interpretation - but many people say, tongues is the least of the gifts. I don't like people saying that, because tongues with interpretation in the public forum is equivalent to prophecy - that's why it's so important that it's interpreted. You can edify yourself if you speak in tongues personally, but in a public capacity, when it's interpreted, it's like prophecy. That's why we ought to pray for the gift of interpretation.

If you look at verse 2 of chapter 14, you will see that this might indicate a different use of tongues: 'For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him'. There needs to be this interpretation, it's not a known language, an unknown language.

In verses 18 and 19 Paul says, look at it, chapter 14: 'I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue'. So, now think about this for a moment - I know I'm covering a lot of ground here, you can listen to the recording afterwards and dissect it all - but Paul must have spoken in tongues a lot in private. How do we know that? Well, listen: the Corinthians went off the deep-end with tongue-speaking, it was completely out of control, that's why he had to come in to regulate it, and yet he says to them: 'Listen guys, I speak in tongues more than the whole lot you put together'.

So, where was this speaking in tongues, when he says in verse 19, 'But in public, among you in the church, I'd rather speak five words in a known language than 10,000 in an unknown tongue'? That's the difference between private praying in tongues, that Paul did more than anybody, and public speaking: there has to be interpretation.

If edification to the church is important, it must be interpreted. If there's no interpretation, Paul says in verse 20 that we're acting like children. Look at verse 20: 'Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature'. Then he quotes Isaiah chapter 28 verses 11 and 12. Look at the verse: 'In the law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me''. Now, what is going on here? Paul takes these verses from Isaiah, where God was warning His rebellious people, Israel, that the next words they would hear would be words of a foreign language, the words of the Assyrian army, and that Assyrian army would be God's executioners of judgment upon them. So Paul is taking this principle and telling these folk: when God speaks to people in a language they can't understand, it is a sign of judgment. That's why you shouldn't be speaking in tongues publicly in a message to the church, if there's not an interpreter - because if an unbeliever comes in, it's a sign of judgment to them. Do you get it?

This was a sign of judgment to Israel, hearing foreign languages, Assyrians - and if you don't interpret the tongue that's being spoken publicly, it confuses the unbeliever, they think you're mad, but it's actually a sign of judgment. So pray for interpretation - for without interpretation, tongues is a sign of judgment to unbelievers. By contrast, prophecy is a sign for believers, a sign of blessing. Look at chapter 14 verses 12 to 13, and I'm nearly finished, chapter 14 verses 12-13: 'Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel'. Just let me pause there for a moment: you are meant to seek to excel in spiritual gifts. 'Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret'

If you speak in tongues, and if you have an urge to speak in tongues publicly in the church, you need to pray for the gift of interpretation - and the church needs to pray for the gift of interpretation in its midst. Ask in faith, like Luke 11 says, and after you ask in faith - faith without works is dead - you know what you then need to do: ask in faith, and then step out in faith and do. Just step out in faith and do. Derek Prince puts

it like this: 'How do you know you have the right thing, or the right gift? Again, God guarantees that if you ask for the right thing, you will not get the wrong thing. If you ask for the right thing, you will not get the wrong thing. This is faith. If it is in the revealed will of God for His people both to speak and interpret in tongues, ask for it and believe it'.

Now, let me explain one or two more things before I close. Interpretation of tongues is not the same as translation. That's why sometimes you might hear someone speak in tongues, hear an interpretation, and you think: 'That's not God. Sure, that was only a few seconds long, that interpretation, but that person went on and on and on forever in tongues'. It's not a word-for-word translation, it's an interpretation. It could be an interpretation that renders a general sense - it's not a word-for-word equivalence. People's personality can even come into this. I mean, we see that in the Bible writers, the authors of the books, their personality comes forth. It might be a thought, it might be a picture, or an idea that the interpretation comes as. People might have to put words to it, it might only be one or two words of interpretation that a person gets, but when they have faith to step out and give it - all of a sudden, the rest comes. That can be the same with prophecy, as we'll see next week.

Look at chapter 12 verse 6: 'There are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all' - it's God. It's to God we must go for these gifts, it's from God that we receive them. Now let me, as I bring this in to land, give you some practicalities if you want to move in speaking in tongues. The supernatural is often more natural than we imagine. One of the biggest obstacles to the supernatural is the desire for the spectacular. So some people are sitting passively waiting on God to zap them - you know, this 'out-of-control' thing we talked about - when really, actually, what it says in Acts 2 is: 'They heard them speak the mighty works of God'. God didn't speak for them, He animated their spirit, but they did the speaking.

Just like Peter had to put one foot out of the boat to walk on water - Jesus didn't walk for him, He kept him above the water, but Peter had to put one foot in front of the other. You've got to speak, if you want to speak in tongues - it will be you speaking, but you've got to speak. This is my word of advice to you: sometimes when we're worshipping, we're praising God, or are in prayer, you will feel something rising up inside you - that's the Holy Spirit, I believe. If you were to open your mouth at that moment, and if you were not to engage your mind as such, but allow that to bypass your mind and come out of your mouth, you'd probably speak in tongues. It might only be a phrase or two, but as you persist, you will find it will deepen and increase - but you've got to take a step of faith.

The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit - Chapter 5

"Prophecy"

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Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 12. We covered an awful lot of ground last week, probably too much - I apologize for that, but it is an in-depth subject, what we were looking at last week: 'Tongues and Interpretation'. You'll probably have to listen over to that again to get the depth of what I was sharing. We'll try, hopefully, to do a bit better here today with the gift of "Prophecy". Now, let me just remind you, before we read anything, that this is inaccurate - what you see on the screen, the division of the categories of the gifts of the Spirit, because there's overlap. As we saw, about the colours of the rainbow, there's kind of overlap, where they phase into one another. But we, for our help, we've carved them up into power gifts (which is faith, healing, miracles), revelation gifts (word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits), and vocal gifts, which we've been looking at the last two weeks: tongues, interpretation of tongues - and this week, we're looking at prophecy.

I just want to read two verses. First of all, chapter 12 verse 31 - we read all these passages, by the way, last week, we'll not do that again. Verse 31 of chapter 12: *"But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way"*. And then he gives us this great purple passage on love, and he tells us that you can have the most supernatural, charismatic ministry in the world - but if you don't have love, you're nothing and it's worth nothing. That must be - and I can't keep recapping the things I did in the introductory week - but that must be a foundation of supernatural ministry: love. Very often it's not, and that's why some of you have got hurt with people who have believed in the gifts of Spirit, because they haven't been exercised in love, grace and sensitivity.

Verse 1 of chapter 14: *"Pursue love"*, so he's just finished talking about this love, *"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy"*. Some people kind of pit against each other the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. They say the fruit of the Spirit is much more important than the gifts of the Spirit - that's not true. The weight of Scripture is not either or, but both and - and we are to pursue love, but desire spiritual gifts, especially that we might prophesy. So we've got to have the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit being manifest in our lives. But he then adds this other emphasis: *"Especially that you might prophesy"*. He sets prophecy higher than any other spiritual gift.

Can I say, before we move on from that: love is connected with the gift of prophecy. Here's the reason why: because prophecy edifies the church - and if you love the church, you'll want the church to be built up. The only way the church can be built up, in a New Testament sense, is through the gift of prophecy. So basically, if you love the church, you will want prophecy to be there. To ignore prophecy is not only to ignore Scripture, it's to ignore God's means whereby the local church can be edified and strengthened. It's the best gift in all the gifts, because it fulfills God's purpose for spiritual gifts the best. What is that purpose? Edification. Over and over we've seen this word - anything that's not edifying, we're to forget about it. That's why

understanding needs to be there, and that's why Paul has prophecy in all of his lists of the gifts of the Spirit, and why it's prioritized in those lists.

Let's just compare tongues with prophecy as it's in this passage. Tongues speaks to God - we saw that - but prophecy speaks to people. Tongues speaks mysteries to God, nobody understands what they're saying unless it's interpreted - that's why that gift is necessary - but prophecy speaks words understood by the speaker and the hearers. Tongues edifies the individual when the individual is praying in tongues, when there's not interpretation in the church; whereas prophecy edifies the church, because there is understanding of what is being said. Now there are occasions in Acts where there were tongues and prophecy together, but I want you to understand this about prophecy - and this is central to it: prophecy has the power to bring about what it proclaims. So, when a true word of prophecy is being given, inherent within it is the actual dynamism of God's Spirit to make that thing happen. It may not happen immediately, but it will happen.

Now prophecy can have many functions and purposes. For instance, prophecy may bring guidance to people - and we see that in the Bible, you know Joseph, the husband of Mary, guardian of Jesus, was given dreams to guide him. There were prophetic dreams, instructive, and visions can be the same - they're different in that you have visions normally in the daytime, unless they're night visions, dreams, and they can be again directive, but they're prophetic when they're like that.

Prophecy can read the hearts of individuals who are hearing - and we see that actually in this portion of Scripture, in chapter 14 of Corinthians. You remember verses 24 and 25: 'If all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you'. So, through prophecy, our hearts can be exposed to the light of God.

Prophecy can see the invisible. You remember Anna and Simeon in the Temple, and Jesus was brought in as a little baby, and they were able to see in Him something that other people couldn't see. That was a prophetic sight, or insight. There's also a foretelling aspect to prophecy. I don't have time to look at it with you, but in Acts chapter 11 there's a prophet, who we'll mention again later on, called Agabus. He prophesied that there was a famine going to come upon the whole world - and it then did take place, and that was a foretelling prophecy. But not all prophecy is foretelling. In fact, I would say most of it is what we might describe as forth-telling, actually, a 'now' word that God is speaking now over people's lives. So there are various operations of prophecy. But what I will say is this to you: in the Acts of the Apostles, and through the teaching of the epistles, we discover that prophecy was part of the normal life of the routine, early church. If we're going to see the church built up today in Lisburn, in Ireland, prophecy has got to be foundational to the gifts of the Spirit, being used.

First of all, I want to ask and answer the question: who can prophesy? In the New Covenant, we see it in Acts 2 - put a marker in there in Corinthians, and come with me to Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost. Peter is trying to bring understanding, edification to the people who have witnessed this speaking in tongues, people hearing in their own languages - and we showed you last week how Acts 2 can be different than 1 Corinthians 12 and 14; but leaving that aside, Peter is wanting to say: 'Now, this is

that, this is what's happening here in a biblical sense. I'm going to explain to you this phenomenon'. In verse 16, he quotes Joel 2: 'This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams' - that's maybe happening to some of you already in the gathering - 'And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy''.

Now that's a pretty comprehensive description there of different types of people, isn't it? There are old people mentioned; but the other three categories, if you look at it, are actually young people. Women are mentioned there. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 11:5, it talks about certain church order in the early church (we'll not get into that in its detail), but it does say that when women pray or prophesy they should have their heads covered. There needs to be an exposition of that passage, and indeed the other one that I did skip over - OK, I'll grant you, I skipped over the bit about the women keeping silent in the church in chapter 14, because - look - I had enough trouble with the gifts, I'm not getting into that one in my weeks here! But you understand that this is for both sexes, the prophetic gift. In fact, in Acts 21 we read of Philip, who was an evangelist, who had four daughters who were prophetesses. Derek Prince actually says 'Considering the culture in the Middle East, it's extremely unlikely that Philip would have had four unmarried daughters who were much older than fifteen. So, in all likelihood, these four virgin daughters, they're described as, were fifteen or below. These were young girls, and they were prophetesses. Imagine if your kids started prophesying to you! It can happen. Someone said there is no Junior Holy Spirit - isn't that true?

What I want to emphasize here is that the prophetic ministry now in the New Covenant is broadening. The coming of Christ into the world did not end the gift of prophecy, but rather extended it to all of God's children: 'They shall prophesy'. Now there are several differences between Old Testament and New Testament prophecy, and we can't go into it all here today - but what we will say is this: God envisaged a community of the prophetic in the New Covenant. Do you remember when the prophet was encouraged to stop others prophesying? He said, 'I wish everybody could prophesy. I wish the Spirit would come on everybody'. That's what we see a fulfillment of in the New Testament: a community of prophecy. All can prophesy. Now, let me emphasize this distinction: I'm not saying that everyone has the gift of prophecy. You may say: 'Well, what's the difference?'. Well, what I'm saying is: every one of you can pray for someone else to be healed. If any of you are confronted by a demonic spirit, you've all got the authority and the power to deal with that. That's what Mark 16 talks about: 'They shall cast out demons; they shall lay hands on the sick' - who are they? Those who believe.

So, you might be able to give a word of prophecy to someone, but it doesn't mean that you're operating in the gifting of prophecy most of the time - which I think your pastor, Gary, has. Then there's another distinction between just prophesying to someone and having the gift of prophecy, and then another level is 'the prophet', which is more like an office. Remember the gifts that we talked about in Ephesians 4 that are the people, the people are the gifts, not the abilities - that's chapters 12, 13 and 14 of Corinthians - but in chapter 4 of Ephesians, the people: apostles, pastors, evangelists, teachers - so they are the people that are the gifts. Are you with me?

So there is a distinction. But when we talk about prophecy of encouraging one another in the Spirit, and we will tease that out a little bit more, it says we all can do this. If you look at chapter 14, look at verse 31, we have an accurate description of what prophecy should be like. Chapter 14 verse 31: 'For you can all prophesy' - there's the 'all' - 'one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged'. So understanding is important, encouragement is important, and then go to chapter 14 verse 4. This is a key verse to do with prophecy: 'He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church'. It's all about building up. The preceding verse, verse 3, tells us three ways that prophecy builds up the church. 'He who prophesies speaks edification' - another word for that is 'strengthening' - 'exhortation' - which is another word for 'encouragement' - 'and comfort', which is 'comfort', 'to men'.

So, this is what prophecy is meant to do, OK? 'Edify', which is 'build up'; 'exhort', which is 'stir up', motivate people; and 'comfort', which is 'cheer up'. So, the difference, intrinsically, between the Old Testament prophecy and New Testament is: New Testament edifies, builds up, exhorts, stirs up, and comforts, cheers up; whereas, generally speaking, prophecy in the Old Testament was judgmental. Prophecy in the Old Testament, generally speaking, was more to unbelievers who were in the congregation of God's people nevertheless, but they were unbelieving, they were disobedient, and God's prophets were bringing judgment. Whereas in the New Testament, prophecy, we've read together, is a sign to believers that God is in their midst and even unbelievers can be affected by that.

So, sometimes the 'prophets' that we see in the church today, they're always blazing bolts of fire and judgment to this city, that city, the other city. They're condemning people for their sin, etc. We have to be very careful, because that doesn't always align with what New Testament prophecy is. New Testament prophecy certainly never does the devil's work - and he is the accuser of the brothers. He's the condemner; whereas the Holy Spirit, 'Parakletos', you've heard that word already, is the One who comes alongside, comforts, helps, counsels. He is our Advocate from God. That doesn't mean that a word of prophecy can't be corrective, can't bring a certain amount of discipline, or even be quite stern at times. But New Testament prophecy, the general tone of it is not judgment, but building up, stirring up, and cheering up - edifying, exhorting, and comforting. Do you get it?

But I'm sure you, hopefully, are picking up as I'm going through here, that God does not discourage believers from prophesying. On the contrary, He encourages it. So, what exactly is it? Well, effectively, it is speaking to people from God. That's quite simple. But it's telling something that God has spontaneously brought to you. A word in season, you may want to look up Isaiah 50:4 at some stage, a word in season is a word of prophecy. Now, one of the objections to this, you know, prophecy being a message from God is: 'Well, does this not demean Scripture? Does this not make prophecy equal to Scripture?'. I've had people say to me, you know, 'You need all these blank note papers at the back of your Bible to fill in all the prophecies that are being made. You're adding to Holy Scripture, and Scripture is quite clear that you ought not to do that'. The fact of the matter is: New Testament prophets never ever spoke with the same authority equal to Scripture.

Turn with me to Acts chapter 21. We're seeing this guy Agabus again, who I mentioned earlier. Acts chapter 21:4, Luke writes: 'And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem'. Now, what does that

say? Was this a false prophecy? No, it says: 'They told Paul through', what? 'The Holy Spirit not to go', where? 'Up to Jerusalem'. Now come with me up then to verse 11, verse 10: 'And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles''. Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place', from Judaea with Agabus, 'pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus''.

Now, what's going on here? Well, Agabus brought a word that if Paul went to Jerusalem he'd be bound and in danger, and he said it was from the Holy Spirit, and Paul ignored it. He went to Jerusalem, and he said, 'Look, don't break my heart guys!' - because they're all begging: 'Don't go there! This is what the Holy Spirit says is going to happen!'. He says: 'Don't break my heart, I'm going!' - and he went. So, if prophecy is equal to Scripture, Paul disobeyed Scripture. But, you see, it's not. You say: 'Well, what's, what's the anomaly here?'. Well, the anomaly is: Agabus got a message from the Holy Spirit, but his interpretation of that was: 'Yes, Paul, you're going to Jerusalem, and you're going to be bound and hurt, but you shouldn't go'. That was his spin on it, that was the human dimension that he added. That's often what happens in prophecy. God downloads something, and we put our particular slant on it. But Paul, recognizing he was actually destined to go Jerusalem for this reason, heard that the Holy Spirit was warning him: 'Brace yourself for what's coming', but it wasn't a directive to stop him to go.

You see, there's a learning process in this. We're all learning. Look at chapter 14 of Corinthians again, verse 29. We're considering if prophecy demeans scripture: 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge' - or 'weigh'. If prophecy is as authoritative as Scripture, why would we weigh it? We're not to question Scripture, are we? But it says here that we ought to weigh prophecy. Then something else is obvious, that we are to be accountable to Scripture in what's being prophesied, and we're to be accountable to the rest of the body of Christ. First Thessalonians 5:19-21: 'Do not quench the Spirit ' - don't put out the fire of the Spirit - 'Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good'.

Now, do you think these Thessalonians would have despised Scripture, or something equal to Scripture? If prophecy was equal to Scripture? They wouldn't have despised the Word of God in the sense of holy, inspired writ. But what is being said here is: there needs to be an operation of your discernment when prophetic words are given. Don't despise them, but see what is good and what is bad. So, you can have bad prophetic stuff going on. Paul is saying you need to discern between them: keep what's good, reject what's not, but there has to be this accountability to the Holy Scriptures and to the rest of the body of Christ. If you look at verse 30 of chapter 14 of Corinthians, verse 30: 'But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent'. So, what's happening here is: one chap or lady starts prophesying, and then somebody else gets a download from God, a word from God of edification, exhortation and comfort. When they get it, the first one has to keep quiet and let them deliver it. Now, why would you cut someone off in mid-flight if they were delivering a word from God that was equal to Holy Scripture? You wouldn't do it. You wouldn't permit any interruptions - isn't that right?

So this is not equal with Scripture at all. On the contrary, if you look at verse 36, Paul actually distinguishes between prophecy and the Word of God: 'Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet', there it is, 'or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant'. So there he is pitching these prophets, and those who thought they were spiritual, against Paul, who was the apostle, and the one inspired by the Holy Spirit, giving us most of our New Testament, and saying: 'There's no much for these two things'. Prophecy is vital, and it's primary in the church, but let's not fall into this trap of thinking that anyone is saying that it's equal to Holy Scripture.

So, that should temper how we describe words of prophecy. We should realize that prophecy should not be considered as God's word, but human words that the Holy Spirit has influenced; human words that the Holy Spirit has influenced to bring, edification, build up, exhortation, stir up, and comfort, cheer up. Therefore, we should not be walking in - Gary, some morning walks in with the microphone and says: 'Thus says the Lord'. OK? 'The Lord says to you: 'Do this, do that, do the other''. We would be better saying things like: 'I think maybe the Lord is saying', or 'It seems to me that maybe the Lord might be saying' - and we certainly should not be controlling or manipulative in words that we share with others. 'If you don't do this, this is going to happen' - that's witchcraft, that's control and manipulation.

So, you might be sitting there saying: 'Well, what about false prophets and false prophecy?'. Well, there's many warnings about this in Scripture that we don't have time to look at. In the Sermon on the Mount in particular, Matthew 7, Matthew 24, in the last days there will be an increase of false prophets, false Christs and even doing signs and wonders. So, how do we discern the true from the false? Well, let me give you four criteria to test prophecy and prophets.

The first is a truth test. Is what is being shared in accordance with the truth of God's revealed will in His Word? Because the Spirit doesn't contradict Himself - you know that, don't you? First John 4:1-3: 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world'. So, the truth test is: it will not contradict what the Bible teaches, and specifically what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. Remember chapter 12 of Corinthians verse 3, there was this test: 'Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit'. So, this gift of prophecy, like any of the other gifts: is it presenting the authentic Jesus? Is it glorifying Jesus? Is it about Jesus?

First Peter 4:10-11 talks about how the gifts have to bring glory to Jesus: 'As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies' - here's the reason - 'that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen'. Melanie, sharing her testimony - I know I was the one here

and praying and so on, but her healing was nothing to do with me, other than me being a facilitator for what God wants to do and cooperating with Him. We do have a part to play, but the glory doesn't come to us, it must go to God.

So, there's the truth test: does it agree with Scripture? Does it agree with who Jesus is? He came in the flesh - is the doctrine about Jesus sound and does it bring glory to Him? A second test is the love test. We've spent a lot of time talking about chapter 13, but even when a word of prophecy may be correctional or a word of warning, it might be stern, but it has to be edifying and it must not be judgmental.

The third test, after truth and love, is the order test. The place for New Testament prophecy is the local church, that's where it's meant to happen. We get into problems when there are 'Lone Ranger' prophets wandering around with no accountability to local church structures, and coming off with certain things, and predicting things, and no accountability. Then, when it doesn't happen, there's no one there to say: 'Look, what's going on with you?'. So that's why you need to check yourself, if you've got a prophetic word according to Scripture, and according to the things that we've already mentioned: love and truth. But when we give prophetic words, it must be with accountability to our local structure. So, I would encourage you, unless you're a trusted person, trusted by the leadership here, you shouldn't just give a prophetic word, you should be putting it through your pastor and the others who are in authority.

You see, no one has the operation of a spiritual gift in perfection. So, we need the other prophets, and we need the other leaders to discern in a prophetic culture. So there needs to be order: no 'Lone Rangers'. Some prophetic people are a bit like this. It's not that they're not prophetic, it's just they need to come into order. They could have a genuine gift, but it needs to be ordered.

Truth test, love test, order test - and finally, the fruit test. Jesus gave us this very clear understanding of how to know a false prophet from a true prophet: 'Beware of false prophets', Matthew 7:15-17, 'who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly' - this is the important emphasis, 'inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits'. So, the inward root of the heart will be manifested in wrong fruit in their life. 'Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit'. So, if you want to know who's a false prophet and who's a true prophet, or if you want to know what's a prophecy you need to take heed of or ignore, you need to look for fruit in the person's life. First of all, fruit of the Spirit needs to be there - it'll not be there perfectly, but it needs to be evident. What are they? Galatians 5:22-23: love joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control. There's also the fruit of supernatural works as well, that's spoken of in John chapter 15. But gifting, whilst it's important, has to be in tension with fruit of character.

So there's the tests. Have you got it? Truth test, love test, order test and fruit test. Well, quickly, in the time that we have, let's look at how - and this will be quick - how do we prophesy? Just assuming you're not a prophet, and you maybe don't even have the gift of prophecy, how do you recognize if God is giving you a word of encouragement, strengthening, or comfort to someone else? Well, it's often spontaneous to the mind - a bit like words of knowledge and wisdom. It can be impressed on your consciousness, where you just feel and sense that God wants you to

say something to someone.

Paul actually calls this, by the way, if you look at chapter 14, if you look at verses 30 and 31, he calls it 'revelation'. That's where a lot of conservative Christians panic, because they think we're talking about Holy Scripture here. Actually, Paul used that term 'revelation' in a broader sense than biblical inspiration. I could give you a number of verses to show where that's the case, but he's talking about how God is breathing on you, giving you prompts, goading you, prodding you, giving you impressions mentally, emotionally, giving you a kind of intuition that could be called 'prophecy' - it's a kind of revealing of what God wants. There are various ways - it's a bit like listening to the voice of God. I said it before: you need to study how to listen to the voice of God. But this is the parting shot that I want to give you here today: like all the gifts of the Spirit, it's according to our faith. Romans 12:6: 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us' - they're from God - 'let us use them' - we've got to use them - 'if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith'. All these gifts are connected to faith. In regard to prophecy: do as much prophecy as you have faith for, and then shut up! Don't go off on one, on your own steam, but prophesy and move in all the gifts according to faith.

If you want to hear from God, and you want to operate in the prophetic, it requires waiting on God. It requires listening for God, to hear the promptings of His heart. Can I also say to you: if you want to be moving in the prophetic, you need to saturate yourself in this book, the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God - because all the biblical prophets were immersed in the Bible. You need to know the revelation God has already given, if you're wanting to move in revelation for the now, today.

But guess what: the more you practice - in faith now - the more you grow. A toddler that is constantly worried about using wrong grammar is never going to learn to talk. So, as we venture out into this area of the gifts of the Spirit, we need to be humble, we need to recognize nobody has the perfect thing - but we need to take risks, and we need not to take ourselves too seriously either. Some of us have a Christian perfectionist mentality, and we're so scared of failing or being wrong.

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