

Lesson 74: Wednesday March 15, 2017

**HANDOUT**

**Q113. What is a spiritual gift?**

A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers for the good of the Church unto God’s glory.

**Q114. Are all the biblical spiritual gifts given still?**

No, God used certain gifts for a particular purpose and time in human history. God still does miracles, but the gifts that have ceased to be given by God to individuals are the miraculous and revelatory gifts: Apostle of Christ, prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and miracle worker.

* **“Hermeneutics.”**

Speaks to how one reads and interprets Scripture.

Having proper hermeneutics is something learned. Each of us must be taught, trained, and use biblical, tested hermeneutics.

The historic confessions of faith: truths in Scripture are “either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture (necessarily contained).”

**Q113. What is a *spiritual gift*?**

* First, “A spiritual gift”

We are talking about particular kinds of gifts that God gives.

As Christians, we know that everything good we have is a gift from God--our good God.

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights…

**John 3:27** John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.”

* Next, “A spiritual gift is a **God-given** capacity through which the **Holy Spirit**”

**1 Corinthians 12:4-7** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**1 Corinthians 12:11** All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

**Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them…

**1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

1) These gifts are from God, and Scripture particularly highlights the Holy Spirit’s role in this gift giving and gift using.

2) Note next that God gives these spiritual gifts on the basis of His sovereign will alone.

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* Next, “A spiritual gift is a God-given **capacity** through which the Holy Spirit **supernaturally ministers** for the good of the Church unto God’s glory.”

Here we focus on the fact that these spiritual gifts are the ability to do something.

In speaking of spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**, Paul says God,“empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit.”

Paul says in verse **11**, **“**All these [spiritual gifts] are empowered…”

**Romans 12:6** “let us use them…”

**1 Peter 4:10** “As each has received a gift, use it…”

We don’t receive spiritual gifts to sit on them and do nothing; we receive them to use them, serve others with them, and do all this in the way God ordained.

* “A spiritual gift is a God-given capacity through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers **for the good of the Church unto God’s glory**.”

Spiritual gifts are primarily for the good and service of other believers, not ourselves.

**1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

Spiritual gifts are for God’s glory. We have them for and use them unto God’s glory. God’s name and fame must be our hearts’ motivation in all we do; so it is with spiritual gifts.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

* **What are the spiritual gifts we see in the New Testament and are they all given in our day?**

**Administration:** is wisdom and prudence, ability to execute the plans of leadership by managing people, resources, and time for ministry.

**Service:** to take the initiative to meet the practical and physical needs of others.

**Teaching:** to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God (Scripture) rightly.

**Exhortation:** to give support, admonishment, and encouragement to those who are struggling to promote growth and Christian maturity in others.

**Evangelism:** to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ, especially to unbelievers.

**Faith:** to trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, trust in the goodness and plan of the triune God regardless of circumstances.

**Generosity:** to cheerfully and generously contribute time, material resources, and/or money.

**Leadership:** to instill vision, make decisions, motivate, and direct people to accomplish the work of ministry.

**Acts of Mercy:**  to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those who need it, especially those experiencing crisis or pain.

**Prophecy (Proclaiming previous revelation [Scripture in our time] of God):** to proclaim and apply God’s truth and expose sin. This is not claiming to have a personal insight from God, hear from God, or speak for God; rather, in our time period, it is one who proclaims accurately truths found in Scripture alone.

All believers have a call to do these things and have at least some level of ability to do so.

When we speak of someone having a spiritual gift in a particular area, we mean that there is an *advanced ability* that exists in the person. Sometimes this spiritual gift—advanced ability—needs to be trained, cultivated, and instructed on how to wield it most effectively. Nonetheless, God has given spiritual gifts through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally ministers for the good of the Church unto God’s glory.

**Q114. Are all the biblical *spiritual gifts* given still?**

The Holy Spirit no longer gives *individuals* the miraculous and revelatory spiritual gifts that are seen in Scripture and that were present in the first century church or prior. It is neither God’s plan, nor His normal pattern, to distribute miraculous spiritual gifts to Christians and churches today as He did in the times of the Apostles. Those gifts ceased as normative with the Apostles.

Additionally, *new revelation* (something not revealed to us in Scripture already) or private revelation (“hearing” from God) does not happen through, to, or in individuals or groups any longer. God is not speaking personally to us in our heads or audibly to our ears; He is not laying down new revelation.

Because these particular miraculous and revelatory spiritual gifts have ceased to be given by God, this is often called the doctrine of cessationism.

* **Many of the spiritual gifts the New Testament Scripture speaks to that do not remain today, and why they do not remain today:**

**Prophecy (Proclaiming new or personal revelation from God):** This spiritual gift has ceased with the completion of Scripture and the end of the office of the Apostles of Christ in the first century. This gift enabled those with it to have an insight from God, hear directly from God, and/or speak for God. A person with this gift proved they had it by being 100% accurate in every prophecy they spoke--no exceptions.

**Performing Miracles:** The ability to cause something supernatural (beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature) to happen.

**Healing:** The ability to heal any kind of sickness/illness/disability in a complete, immediate, permanent, and undeniable success.

**Speaking Tongues:** The ability to speak in a real human language that was foreign/unknown to the speaker apart from the spiritual gift.

**Interpreting Tongues:** The ability to interpret a real human language that was foreign/unknown to the hearer apart from the spiritual gift.

**Discernment of Spirits:** The ability to, in some measure, discern the hearts of men, their thoughts, purposes, and designs to find out falsehood and hypocrisy.

**Apostleship:** A spiritual gift *role* of a person who was a witness of the resurrected Christ, was personally appointed to Apostleship by Christ, and was able to work miracles and other now ceased spiritual gifts such as new prophecy of special revelation.

* **Six biblical arguments for this historic Christian understanding**

The **first biblical argument for cessationism is the unique role of miracles**.

**The *primary purpose* of miracles has always been to confirm the credentials of a divinely appointed messenger (to establish the credibility of one who speaks for God); not one who teaches or explains the Word of God as I’m doing this evening, but one in whose mouth God has put His very words.**

**A second related argument to that is the end of the gift of Apostleship**.

**Ephesians 4:11** says, “[God] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.” These are roles--gifted roles--God gave the Church.

But the Apostles were a temporary gift. These are capital “A” Apostles; those in a unique role. There are no more Apostles like the Twelve or like Paul. Why is that? Because an Apostle, to be a true Apostle, you had to meet three qualifications.

First, you had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ.

Acts 1:22, “beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” Also see Acts 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8; 1 Cor 15:8–9. You had to be a witness of the life of Christ, and of His resurrection, to be qualified to be an Apostle.

Secondly, to be an Apostle, you had to be personally appointed by the sovereign Christ. In Acts 1:2, the Apostles are referred to as those “whom He had chosen.” When they’re seeking to replace Judas, in their prayer they say to our Lord, “show which one of these two you have chosen.” Also see Acts 9:15; Acts 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 15:7–8.

Thirdly, to be an Apostle, you had to be able to work miracles. In Matthew 10:1–2, Jesus “called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.”

2 Corinthians 12:12, “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.” To be an Apostle, you had to be able to work miracles. Also see Acts 2:43; Acts 4:33; Acts 5:12.

Look at those three qualifications and you realize immediately that there is no one alive today who meets those three qualifications. **So this proves at least one New Testament gift, the gift of Apostleship, has ceased. The Lord is no longer giving the gift of Apostleship. This a significant difference in the work of the Spirit between the time of the Apostles and today, because one of the most miraculous displays of the Spirit, the gift of Apostleship, ended with the Apostolic age**.

It’s also significant that **the gift of Apostleship ceased without a crystal-clear New Testament statement that it would. That means it is neither impossible nor is it unlikely that other significant changes happened with the passing of the Apostles as well without being expressly stated.**

**The third argument for cessationism is the foundational nature of the New Testament Apostles and prophets.**

**Ephesians 2:19-20** “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.”

**A fourth argument for cessationism is the nature of the New Testament miraculous gifts compared to the charismatic gifts claimed today**.

If the Spirit were still gifting believers today with the miraculous gifts, they would be the same gifts that we find in the New Testament; however, **the gifts claimed today bear almost no resemblance to what’s seen in the New Testament**.

Consider, for example, the gift of tongues. According to Luke in Acts 2, **the New Testament gift was the capacity as manifest at Pentecost to speak in a real human language. Listen to Acts 2:7-8: “And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?’” Each of them heard in their own native language**. These were actual languages, known languages.

Consider the nature of **the gift of prophecy**. This too is different; the New Testament gift and today’s manifestation are two different things. Contrary to modern practice, **nowhere does the Scripture allow for prophecy to be anything but 100% correct--no exceptions**. **For those claiming to hear from God or speak prophecy, their words were to be evaluated against previous revelation, but once it was approved, their prophecies were added to the teaching of the Apostles to form the foundation of the church.**

**Prophecy then is direct, infallible revelation. That is not what is called prophecy in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Some wrongly teaching that prophecy still exists suggest that prophecies today should begin with, quote: “I think this is what the Spirit might be saying.” That is not the New Testament gift of prophecy. In the Bible, it was, “Thus says the Lord.” And it was ALWAYS correct.**

**As Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Consider another example: **the gift of healing**. In the New Testament **when someone with the New Testament gift of healing used his gifts, the results were complete, immediate, permanent, and undeniable for every kind of sickness, every kind of illness. We can see that clearly in the Gospels and Acts for example. The purported healings of today’s faith healers are the antithesis of those biblical miracles. They are incomplete. And they are unverifiable**. That is not the spiritual gift of healing.

**A fifth argument for cessationism is the orthodox belief of church history.**

**New Testament flow.**

**Augustine**, writing in the late 300’s and early 400’s, said, “In the earliest times, the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believed and they spoke with tongues which they had not learned as the Spirit gave them utterance. That thing was done for a sign and it passed away.”

Fast forward to the Reformation, when **Martin Luther** writes, “This visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early church as were also the miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Once the church had been established and properly advertised by these miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased.”

**John Calvin said**, “The gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the preaching of the gospel marvelous forever.”

**Jonathan Edwards** writes, “Of the extraordinary gifts, they were given in order to the founding and establishing of the church in the world, but since the canon of the Scriptures has been completed, and the Christian church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased.

The great Baptist preacher, **Charles Haden Spurgeon,** says, “Those earlier miraculous gifts have departed from us.”

**B.B. Warfield** writes, “These gifts were distinctly the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it. The miraculous working which is but the sign of God’s revealing power cannot be expected to continue and in point of fact, does not continue after the revelation of which it is the accompaniment had been completed.”

And note that the best **confessions in the historic Church** affirm this; such as the Baptist Confession of 1689, which says, the “former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.”

**The sixth argument for cessationism is the sufficiency of Scripture**. This is so critical. Sola Scriptura.

The canon of Scripture closed with the writings of the Apostles and their authorized companions. **The New Testament teaches that the result of God’s completed revelation is an all-sufficient Scripture in many places**.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**” There’s nothing left that’s needed for us. The man of God needs no additional revelation from God; he has all God has given for the post-Apostolic period in the Bible.** **The Spirit speaks only in and through the inspired Word…the words found in Scripture**.

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