

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (continued) - The GIFTS of the Spirit and the FRUIT of the Spirit

Today's study will focus on the following questions: *Do the gifts of the Spirit make a person holy? Is holiness demanded before the gifts are given? Are gifts an evidence of holiness? What happens if the gifts are ministered from a carnal life?* Central to this whole area of study is an understanding of the difference between the *gifts of the Spirit* and the *fruit of the Spirit*:

- 1) **GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT ARE GIVEN FROM THE OUTSIDE, MORE IMMEDIATELY, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT** - While it is true that the will is involved in the *exercise* of any gift, and we may *seek* and *pray* for particular gifts of the Spirit, *the Holy Spirit alone gives out the gifts as He sees fit* - 1 Corinthians 12:11 - "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills."

In fact, all through the gift distribution passage (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) the emphasis is on the *spontaneous giving*, the *impartation* of gifts freely by the Spirit of God.

- 2) **THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT CAN BE GIVEN AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN DIFFERENT LIVES** - Sometimes, gifts are given *right at the beginning* of the Christian life - Acts 19:6 - "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and *prophesying*."

They can also be given for *specific times of service and ministry* - 1 Timothy 4:13-14 - "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. [14] Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you."

The Scriptures also seem to hint that particular gifts can be desired and prayed for at *any time during the Christian life* - 1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:13, 39 - 12:31 "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way"....14:13 - "Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret"....14:39 - "So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues."

From this sampling we can see that the gifts of the Spirit aren't meted out as a reward on the basis of works or personal holiness.

- 3) **UNLIKE THE GIFTS, THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT GROWS GRADUALLY FROM WITHIN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE** - These qualities are outlined briefly in Galatians 5:22-23 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law"

The process of the development of this fruit is called "*growing in grace*". It takes place as the believer learns to "*abide in Christ*" - John 15:1-8 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. [2] Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. [3] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. [4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. [5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. [7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

- 4) **FRUIT HAS TO DO WITH CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER. GIFTS HAVE TO DO WITH EXTENDED CAPACITIES FOR MINISTRY** - The fruit of the Spirit is for all who learn to abide in Jesus. The gifts of the Spirit are given to enable specific capacities for ministry by the Holy Spirit as distinct needs arise. They are not *for* the one exercising the gift. Rather, they are a divine extension of divine grace to someone in need.

It's important to remember these basic truths. There are many popular misconceptions about the beliefs of Pentecostal people.

Pentecostals do *not* (or *should not*) believe they are holier, better, or more loved by God than non-pentecostals. The issue here is *not* acceptability before God or gaining entrance to a higher stage of spirituality. The Gifts of the Spirit *do* enable a fuller, more powerful witness to the *supernatural nature of the Kingdom of God*. The role of the gifts is always *witness and ministry* in the New Testament (see Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 14:26).

- 5) **THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT DON'T AUTOMATICALLY SANCTIFY THE INDIVIDUAL** - Paul makes it clear that the Gifts of the Spirit can be exercised in lives that are carnal and self-centered. This is the whole point of Paul's letter to the church at Corinth (see especially 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."

Spiritual gifts ought to be exercised in an atmosphere at *spiritual maturity and love for the church*. They *can* be abused in an atmosphere other than this, but when they are usually nothing positive or lasting will be accomplished. After all, a "*clanging cymbal*" is annoying after

a while.

- 6) **PURSUIING THE BALANCED SPIRITUAL LIFE** - Gifts and fruit must be held as an inseparable unit in the truly solid Christian life. ***That is why 1 Corinthians 13 is placed between chapters 12 and 14.*** This balance is the ***"more excellent way"*** described in **1 Corinthians 12:31**. See also Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 14:1** - ***"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy."***

Notice ***love and spiritual gifts, not love instead of spiritual gifts.*** Either side is incomplete without the other. The Word cannot be truly honored if the gifts of the Spirit are ignored. This has ***two implications for the church:***

- a) ***The church must always exercise the gifts in love and humility.*** Those exercising spiritual gifts must remain ***teachable*** and ***open to the authority of the church.*** This means people who frequently function ***prophetically*** (just to pick an example) must use their gift in a church where they ***regularly attend*** so others feel comfortable discerning their words. They must submit themselves to teaching, and be known by those giving leadership to the rest of the body. Otherwise, gifts can cause more harm than good.
- b) ***Any negative bias against the current operation of the Gifts of the Spirit must be overcome.*** Churches must take their cue from the clear teaching of the New Testament, rather than the biases of their limited comfort zones. ***Time*** must be made in our ritual or program oriented services for the Spirit to begin to work again in hearts. ***Outside of blatant fanaticism, there may be no greater threat to the fresh wind of the Spirit in our churches than the fear of what may be new or unexpected.*** People must once again ***open up to each other in ministry*** (remember that's what the gifts are given for in the first place) and ***open up to the Lord in worship and prayer.*** Remember that the Spirit was first outpoured as the church was gathered in prayer and waiting on God. This pattern is probably still relevant to hungry hearts today.