

Trinity Lutheran Church
Minocqua, Wisconsin

July 29, 1990

The Holy Spirit and His Gifts (Part I)

- A study of what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit
and His work among God's people today -

Setting Our Sights

1. Our Lutheran Confessions have much to say about the Holy Spirit
 - a. The Nicene Creed
 - b. The Third Article
2. Why does more need to be said now?
 - a. The impact of the charismatic movement
 - b. With that, the question: Are we missing out on something? In answer, take a look at the Scriptures for answers to such questions as:

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to be empowered by the Spirit?

How does a Christian get filled with the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to be gifted by the Holy Spirit?

Where do the gifts of miracles, healing, and speaking in tongues fit in?

What are the spiritual gifts Christians today should especially desire?

A. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. A look at the Scriptures
 - a. John 14:25,26; 15:26 - What will be a vital part of the Holy Spirit's work?
 - b. John 16:7, 12-15 - Whom does the Holy Spirit glorify?

- c. 1 Corinthians 12:3 - What does the Holy Spirit enable us to do?

2. For discussion

- a. In view of the above, what would be a good sign of the Holy Spirit's presence in a congregation or a person's life?
- b. One author calls the Holy Spirit the "shy member of the Trinity." Explain.
- c. What do you think is the reasoning behind the following statement: "I have become convinced that those persons are most filled with the Holy Spirit who are least conscious of it"?
- d. Food for thought: "The work of the Holy Spirit is the honoring of Jesus Christ....We are not necessarily in the presence of the Holy Spirit when we are in the presence of a great deal of talk about the Holy Spirit. But wherever a church or a person centers thoughtfully (that is, biblically and evangelically) on honoring the person, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ, there, we may be quite sure, we are in the presence of the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit's work is the thoughtful honoring of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not center on the Holy Spirit....The Holy Spirit is most present where Jesus is most central" (Frederick Dale Bruner, The Holy Spirit -- Shy Member of the Trinity)
- e. Summary: A church that does not put the spotlight on the Holy Spirit is not necessarily a Spirit-deprived church. The spotlight, as the Holy Spirit Himself shows us, always belongs on Jesus. The Holy Spirit's work is to "make Jesus big for us." How will this affect our lives? This is answered as we look at the next question:

B. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. The big question: What is the sign of the Spirit's powerful presence in a believer's life?
 - a. The claims of some: that the Holy Spirit brings one to a life free from troubles and a faith so strong as to make a person always happy and certain
 - 1) What might be the result for the "ordinary" Christian upon hearing these reports of a perpetually triumphant faith and life?

- 2) "Triumphalism [the idea that the Christian life will always be happy and rosy] is a religion for winners." What do you think these words mean?
- b. The way the Scriptures speak about the Christian's faith and life
- 1) Matthew 3:13-17; 4:1ff - What happened to Jesus right after He was anointed with the Spirit at His baptism?
 - 2) Romans 7:15-20 (also Galatians 5:16-17) - What is the significance of the present tense verbs in these verses?
 - 3) Romans 8:16-20; 28-39 - What do the Scriptures assume we will face in our lives?
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - What burden did the Spirit-filled Paul (Acts 9:17) have to bear?

The Christian is not immune to suffering

- a) Genesis 3:16-19 - Becoming a Christian does not deliver...

a woman from the pangs of childbirth

a man from tilling soil filled with thorns and thistles

men and women from sickness and death (cf. the following examples, in addition to Paul above (2 Cor 12:7-10) of believers who suffered illnesses: Isaac; Job; Trophimus [2 Tim. 4:20]; Epaphroditus [Phil. 2:27]; Timothy [1 Tim. 5:23])

- b) Bodily perfection will occur only after the resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:49 - "Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"

Philippians 3:21 - "[The Lord Jesus Christ] will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself"

- c. The way the Scriptures speak about the Holy Spirit's power in the midst of a Christian's life
- 1) Matthew 4:1-11 - What happened when Jesus was tempted?
 - 2) Romans 8:1-2 - What are we promised as we face and sometimes are overcome by temptations?
 - 3) Galatians 5:22-23 - What is the Spirit constantly doing to overshadow the works of the flesh?
 - 4) Romans 8 - What assurances is the Spirit constantly giving us in days of difficulty?
- v. 16 -
- vv. 17,18 -
- vv. 26,27 -
- v. 28 -
- vv. 38-40 -

2. For discussion

- a. How would you describe a person whose life is being empowered by the Holy Spirit?
- b. Why do you think that "triumphalism" (a religion of success, prosperity, and easy victories) has found such a large following in our country?
- c. "God's grace is most evident in those Christians who are not spared adversity." Why is this so?
- d. Summary: The Holy Spirit's promised power is present in believers' lives not only when they are apparently successful in everything they do, but also, and especially, when believers are enabled to pass through the dark valley of temptation and suffering and still keep their eyes fixed and their hopes fastened on Jesus. "The Holy Spirit...takes the crucified and risen Christ out of the remoteness of history and heavenly glory and places Him as a living and redeeming reality in the midst of our life with its suffering, inner conflict, and death" (Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator).

It is clear that we need the Holy Spirit. So we ask next...

C. HOW DOES ONE BECOME FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Two Key Questions Need to Be Asked:

1. Question #1: How does a Christian receive the Holy Spirit?
 - a. Galatians 3:1-5 - How had the Galatians received the Holy Spirit?

How should they continue to receive Him?
 - b. John 3:5; Acts 2:38 - When does one receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?
 - c. Ephesians 6:17 - How does one continue to be filled with the Spirit?
 - d. Conclusion: We don't have to live up to a certain set of conditions to receive the Holy Spirit. The filling with the Holy Spirit is God's doing. The Holy Spirit uses...
 - 1) words, the words of Scripture, both formally and informally;
 - 2) water together with the Word; and
 - 3) Christ's body and blood together with the Word
 - e. For discussion
 - 1) Our Sunday worship which brings to us Word and Sacrament is a key to our being filled with the Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19 we are told, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire." How might we do just that in a worship service?
 - 2) "The Holy Spirit is shy about everything except the gospel." Explain.
 - 3) "Many Christian people are looking for a power they already have; we are searching for something that God has already placed within us....In baptism we were given the Holy Spirit. As the people of God, we do not have to be given special spiritual conditions or new startling demands in order to have that power we need to live our lives patiently or victoriously; we only need to believe the gospel that tells us that when we were baptized we were given the gift of the Spirit....We have all the resources we need for

conquering the evil one, for resisting temptation, for being adequate in our callings, for living the moral life, for courage in failure....For the Holy Spirit was placed within us at our baptism and faith, simple faith in Christ, the faith that sighs and says its prayers, receives the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit again and again" (Bruner, The Holy Spirit--Shy Member of the Trinity).

What are some ways by which the Holy Spirit's indwelling through baptism can become more of a daily source of strength to us?

2. Question #2: Is there more than one filling of the Holy Spirit, a first at baptism and a second, different filling at some later date?
 - a. The Scriptures do not prescribe a different filling at some later date
 - 1) But they do encourage us to keep on being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)
 - 2) They do assume that we will be asking regularly to be filled with the Spirit and that our prayers will be heard (Luke 11:13)
 - b. For discussion
 - 1) Being filled with the Spirit does not necessarily mean that one will always feel filled. How, then, can one know if he or she is filled with the Spirit?
 - 2) Someone has written, "To want the Spirit is to have the Spirit." When will this be true in a believer's life? When won't it be true?

The Holy Spirit fills us by focusing the spotlight on Jesus through the gospel in Word and Sacrament, thus empowering us to be "more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Ro 8:37). He also promises us whatever gifts we need to be of service to one another in the body of Christ. We ask next...

D. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GIFTED BY THE SPIRIT?

1. The Holy Spirit equips believers with charismata (special gifts of grace)
 - a. Their purpose: for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7)

- b. Their distribution: to every Christian, in amounts and combinations as the Spirit wills (1 Cor. 12:11)
 - c. Their types: speaking gifts and serving gifts (1 Pet. 4:10,11; see also Rom. 12:1-8 and all of 1 Cor. 12)
2. For discussion
- a. "The Spirit comes in different sizes, shapes, or functions in every believer....There is a person inside each one of us that the uniquely shaped gift of the Holy Spirit is trying to bring into being." What does this truth do to spiritual pride? To a spiritual inferiority complex?
 - b. "The curse of Christian life is trying to be someone we are not, with gifts we do not have." How can a Christian keep from getting caught up in such a life that is beneficial neither to the individual nor to the rest of the body of believers?

Conclusion

When we think of the Holy Spirit may we be led to think of . . .

His promised purpose: He keeps our eyes fixed on Jesus

His promised power: He gives us strength to face any and all trials and tribulations

His promised filling: Through the gospel in Word and Sacrament He leads us to feast upon Jesus

His promised gifts: Through spiritual gifts specially tailored for each Christian He enables us to lovingly to serve one another within the Body of Christ

If you love Jesus and want to do His will, this is a sure sign that Holy Spirit has been and is busily at work in you as the "Lord and Giver of life," the life that is in Christ Jesus.

Suggested Reading:

John R. W. Stott, Baptism and Fullness--The Work of the Holy Spirit Today (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964)

Frederick Dale Bruner and William Hordern, The Holy Spirit--Shy Member of the Trinity (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984)

Trinity Lutheran Church
Minocqua, Wisconsin

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The Holy Spirit and His Gifts (Part II)

The Gifts of Miracles, Healings, and Speaking in Tongues

Setting Our Sights

We look first at those spiritual gifts--miracles, healing, speaking in tongues--which tend to elicit the most attention because of their spectacular nature. Because of the claims of some that these gifts should be expected by Christians today, we need to take a careful look at them, at both their meaning and their purpose. We agree with many Bible scholars that these are "confirmatory" gifts. What is meant by this and why they are classified in this way will become clear in the course of our study.

A. MIRACLES (1 Cor. 12:10,28)

1. What is a miracle?

- a. Greek: dunamis (power)
teras (wonder)
semeion (sign)

- b. A miracle is an act of supernatural power, God overturning the normal course of nature.

Examples: power over disease, demons, nature, matter, death

- c. A miracle elicits awe and wonderment (cf. Mk. 2:12, healing of the paralytic; 6:51, calming the storm; Lk 5:9, miraculous catch of fish).

- d. A miracle is a sign, authenticating the doer of the miracle as a divinely commissioned servant of the Lord (cf. Jn. 6:14, "Surely this is the prophet"; Acts 9:42, "Many believed in the Lord"; 14:11, "The gods have come down to us in human form!").

2. Definition

The gift of miracles is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to perform powerful

acts that alter the course of nature, such acts serving to authenticate them and their message as being from God.

3. The gift of miracles in the history of the church

- a. Clustered around critical periods of history:
 - + the exodus
 - + time of the prophets
 - + life of Christ
 - + early church

In each case this gift authenticated a servant of God.

- b. Possible today? Cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3,4 - Miracle-working was a gift to authenticate the apostles as divinely commissioned servants of the Lord and therefore not to be expected today since the special revelation they were given is complete

4. Sign-seeking

- a. "A wicked generation...asks for a miraculous sign" (Luke 11:29).
- b. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

B. HEALING (1 Cor. 12:9,28,30)

1. Definition

The gift of healing is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as intermediaries through whom it pleases God to cure illness and restore health apart from the use of "natural" means.

2. The gift of healing according to the Bible

- a. Examples of Jesus' miracles of healing (25 mentioned): Mark 1:29-34, sick and demon-possessed; 1:40-42, leper; 2:2-12, paralytic; 3:1-5, shriveled hand; 3:7-10, diseases and evil spirits; 5:25-43, the dead; 7:32-37, deaf and mute; 8:22-26, blind

Peter: Acts 3:1-11, lame; 5:14-16, sick and evil spirits ("all" healed); 9:32-43, the dead

Paul: Acts 14:8-10, crippled; 19:11,12, sick and evil spirits; 20:7-12, the dead; 28:7-9, sick

b. Some conclusions about New Testament healings:

- 1) Believers and unbelievers were healed
- 2) Healing was instantaneous and complete (one exception: Mark 8:22-26)
- 3) Healing occurred with and without prayer requests
- 4) Anyone who was brought was healed
- 5) Included even raising from the dead
- 6) Served to glorify God and authenticate the doer as sent from God

3. The "gift of healing" today

a. As compared with the gift of healing in New Testament times:

- 1) Generally, only believer healing
- 2) Sometimes a gradual and partial healing
- 3) Only for those who seek it
- 4) Some healed, others not
- 5) No power to restore life
- 6) Often glorify the "healer" instead of God

b. How the Lord generally heals (cf. Psalm 50:15; James 5:14,15)

c. Special gifts of healing possible yet today? We dare not limit God, but consider the evidence:

- 1) Of Bible history: only certain periods
- 2) Of the purpose for such a gift (Heb. 2:3,4): authenticated the apostles and their message
- 3) Of the history of the church: not present for most of its history
- 4) Of the "gift of healing" today as compared with this gift in Bible times: in general, the two are not identical

4. Why illness and suffering?

- a. Romans 8:18 - to remind us that our final redemption is still in the future;
- b. Isaiah 43:2 - to help keep our trust centered in the Lord;
- c. Psalm 119:67,71; Heb. 12:5,11 - at times to lead us back to the Lord;
- d. 2 Corinthians. 12:9-11 - to make us more effective servants of the Lord.

5. Conclusion:

In sickness:

- + pray for healing
- + ask others to pray
- + persist in prayers
- + if no healing, trust that the Lord's good purposes for you are still being served

Pray to be like Paul:

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11)

6. Miracles and healing summarized

At three crucial times in history the Lord granted to his Church the gifts of miracles and healing--at the time of Moses, of Elijah, and of Jesus and his apostles. These gifts were confirmatory in nature, appearing on the biblical scene during periods of prophecy and/or new revelation. With the completion of the Scriptures, therefore, we would expect a cessation of these gifts. While not ruling out the fact that our Lord is free to do as he pleases yet today, the evidence indicates that these gifts have ceased to be given to individuals. Christians today, however, should not neglect to call upon the Lord in every need with the confidence that with God all things, even the miraculous, still are possible.

7. For discussion

- a. Do miraculous things ever happen in the life of a Christian? If so, what is the difference between this and the gift of miracles?

- b. How do you answer one who says, "More people would believe in Jesus today if his followers were still doing miracles"?
- c. Discuss the pros and cons of a congregation having special prayer services for healing.
- d. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? When a Christian prays for healing, he or she should expect God to do it.

C. SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES
(1 Cor. 12:10,30)

1. Historical background

The modern "tongues movement" began in a 1906 revival meeting in Azusa, California, out of which have sprung the various "pentecostal" churches, the Assemblies of God in particular. In the early 1960s tongues-speaking began to appear in some of the mainline Protestant bodies, e.g., Episcopalian, Lutheran, which marked the beginning of the "charismatic movement." The charismatic movement spread also to the Roman Catholic church in the last half of the 1960s.

How important is speaking in tongues to those involved in it? Let a charismatic Lutheran answer: "The charismatic movement cannot be reduced simply to speaking in tongues. Yet neither can it be understood or explained apart from tongues.... It is no 'frill' or 'extra' in their Christian life--something which they could now take or leave depending on their mood." "Scripture doesn't say that speaking in tongues is the only sign of baptism in the Spirit. But Scripture gives us no consistent suggestion of any other."

Our goal in this brief study is to see what the Scriptures say about this subject and to determine to what degree, if any, the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues is present in the Church yet today.

2. What is the gift of speaking in tongues?

- a. The biblical basis: Acts 2:1-13, Pentecost; 8:14-17, Samaria; 10:44-47, Joppa (Cornelius); 19:1-7, Ephesus; 1 Cor. 14:2ff, Corinth

b. Definition

The gift of **speaking in tongues** is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to speak in another real language, but one not known by the speaker.

The gift of **interpretation of tongues** is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to interpret the words of a person with the gift of speaking in tongues.

3. The purpose of the gift

- a. According to the Bible: Acts 2:1-13; 10:44-47;
19:1-7;
1 Cor. 14

In the Book of Acts tongues speaking authenticates the presence of the Holy Spirit; nowhere is it said, however, or even implied that speaking in tongues is necessary for the Spirit's presence and working (compare Acts 13:52).

In 1 Cor. 14 Paul strongly encourages prophecy but does not forbid tongues, properly used, for worship.

- b. According to present day charismatics

When Pentecostals read the Book of Acts they sense power, the power of the Holy Spirit at work. When they look at the contemporary church, they see a lack of power. They believe that they have found the source of this power again. Speaking with tongues is a second baptism, they claim, a Spirit baptism, following water baptism, in which one is permanently, personally and fully indwelt with the Holy Spirit and thus empowered for service.

They maintain that speaking with tongues is the outward sign of "a fresh release or bestowal of the Holy Spirit which will be marked and manifest....The issue of the experience is a vitalization of one's faith,...a signal breakthrough or release of the power of the Holy Spirit,...receiving power to live the Christian life more effectively and fruitfully."

4. How one receives this gift

- a. According to the Bible: 1 Corinthians 12:11 - no prerequisites; God gives as he wills

b. According to present day charismatics:

- + water baptism
- + obedience
- + prayer
- + fervent faith

5. Some biblical limitations on the gift

- a. 1 Corinthians 12:13,28 - Tongues are not the sign of baptism in the Spirit.
- b. John 15:5 - Tongues are not needed to serve God effectively and with power.
- c. 1 Corinthians 12:11; Galatians 3:5 - No spiritual gift can be obtained by obeying a set of conditions.
- d. 1 John 4:1 - Not every manifestation of tongues is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- e. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 - Tongues are not necessarily the sign of maturity or spirituality.
- f. Romans 16:17; John 8:31 - Tongues should not be the basis for uniting Christians.

6. Tongues and interpretation of tongues summarized

On the basis of this brief survey we can draw the following conclusions:

- a. Accept speaking in tongues as a New Testament gift present in at least some of the congregations (Acts 2; 10; 19; 1 Corinthians 14).
- b. As far as speaking in tongues today is concerned, don't condemn all manifestations of it as wrong (1 Corinthians 14:39), but be sure to check it out carefully (1 John 4:1).
- c. Trust that God will always give you what you need to live your Christian life to the full, even without speaking in tongues (John 10:10; Philippians 4:19).
- d. Continue to place emphasis on clear proclamation of the Word (1 Corinthians 14:23-25)

7. For discussion

- a. Agree or Disagree? A WELS member who begins to speak in tongues should be placed under church discipline.
- b. In response to the Pentecostal contention that traditional churches lack the power of the Holy Spirit, what should we say? What should we do?

Trinity Lutheran Church
Minocqua, Wisconsin

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The Holy Spirit and His Gifts (Part III)

Speaking Gifts

Setting Our Sights

In this part of our study and the following one we are using the division of gifts as suggested by 1 Peter 4:10,11, namely speaking and serving gifts. This is a handy way to divide them, although the gifts in both groups are not exclusively speaking or serving, i.e., one with a speaking gift will be serving as he or she uses that gift and one with a serving gift might well do some speaking in the exercise of that gift. The gifts we will be studying in this and the next section are those which the Holy Spirit is quite obviously giving to the Church yet today.

A. EVANGELIST (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5)

1. Acts 8:4-8,26-40 Philip the Evangelist at Work

vv. 4-8 - Philip proclaims the Good News to multitudes in Samaria.

v. 26 - He is commissioned to leave the comforts and success of his work in the city.

vv. 27-34 - He is sent to a single individual.

v. 35 - In one word, what was Philip's message to the eunuch?

vv. 36-38 - What was the outcome of Philip's evangelistic work?

Compare with Matt. 28:19,20 - What are the two things involved in going and "making disciples"?

v. 39 - What change do we see in the eunuch's life?

v. 40 - What did Philip continue to do?

Who was leading Philip in all of this?

Some Conclusions:

- 1) Evangelism involves getting up and going out to people.
- 2) An evangelist is one who tells the Good News especially to those who are not yet trusting in Jesus as Savior.
- 3) The message of an evangelist is a simple one: Jesus.
- 4) An evangelist may work one-on-one or address a multitude.
- 5) The purpose of an evangelist is to make disciples through the use of Word and Sacrament.

2. Definition

The gift of evangelist is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to present the gospel especially to those who are not a part of the Body of Christ.

Possible distinctions between an evangelist and a witness (compare Mark 5:19,20 with Acts 8:26-40):
Differences in 1) depth of the message and 2) kind of assignment given

3. For discussion

- a. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements (give reason(s) for your answer)?
 - 1) An extrovert makes the best evangelist.
 - 2) A lay person will generally be a more effective evangelist than a pastor.
 - 3) The goal of an evangelist is simply to tell someone the Good News about Jesus.
- b. What can a congregation do for those who may not have the gift of evangelism but who do want to share their faith with others?
- c. Why do congregations often have trouble getting people to serve on an evangelism committee? What can be done about this?

B. PASTOR-TEACHER (Eph. 4:11,12)

1. The last of the four equipping ministries (Eph. 4:11,12)
 - a. Apostles - proclaimed and wrote down the Spirit-inspired Word and in this way gave us the New Testament of our Bible
 - b. Prophets - from time to time received special Spirit-given Word for the early Church before the New Testament was completed
 - c. Evangelists - communicate the gospel especially to those not yet Christians
 - d. Pastor-Teachers - apply the Word to those already Christian with the purpose of building up spiritual life (Note: In Eph. 4:11,12 pastor and teacher are joined together as one gift, pastor-teacher. In 1 Cor. 12:28 and Rom. 12:7 teacher is listed separately. Pastor is never listed apart from teacher - cf. 1 Tim. 3:2, "able to teach")

2. Meaning of "pastor"

From a Greek word meaning "shepherd" (cf. John 21:16; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)

The work of a shepherd, according to Psalm 23: To feed, guide, guard

3. The office of pastor-teacher

In the New Testament the title "pastor" as spiritual leader of a flock is found only in Eph. 4:11. For other titles given to the leaders of Christ's flock in the New Testament church cf. Tit. 1:5-9.

A key task of the pastor-teacher is the use of God's Word to guide, feed, and protect the flock. When this is done faithfully God's people are equipped for every good work (Eph. 4:11,12; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

4. The gift of shepherding

- a. While the pastor, by virtue of his calling, is the shepherd of the whole flock, to some the Holy Spirit may well give the gift of shepherding, or disciplining, their fellow Christians.

b. Definition

The gift of **shepherding** is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ that enables them to assume an ongoing personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of another Christian or group of Christians.

5. For discussion

- a. Is it possible for women to have the gift of "shepherding"? If so, how might they use it in the congregation?
- b. Some congregations have divided themselves into small mutual care groups ("zones," "shepherding groups"), each under the care of an elder. What do you think of this? What would have to be looked for in choosing elders?

C. TEACHING (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28,29)

1. Distinctions to be made

- a. Between teaching and prophecy in the early church
prophecy: revealed new truth from God
teaching: explained and applied the revealed truth of God
- b. Between teaching and evangelizing
evangelism: message aimed chiefly at the unbeliever
teaching: message aimed chiefly at the believer

2. Definition

The gift of **teaching** is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God.

"A person with the gift of teaching will be marked by two characteristics. He will have a keen interest in the personal study of the Word and in the disciplines involved in studying the Scriptures....Also he will have the capacity to communicate clearly the truths and applications of the Word so that others may learn and profit. After you have heard a 'teacher' teach, your response

should be: 'I see what he means'" (McRae, The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts)

3. The value for the Church of the gift of teaching

Matt. 28:19,20 - How are disciples made?

Examples in the early church:

Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching"

Acts 5:21: Apostles, upon release from prison, taught

Acts 5:42: Taught even after being beaten

Acts 11:26: Paul and Barnabas teach the believers for one year in Antioch

Acts 18:11: One and one-half years of teaching in Corinth

Acts 19:10: Two years of teaching in Ephesus

2 Tim. 2:2: Teaching as an equipping ministry

The gift of teaching is an ongoing need in the Church, both to build up spiritually the present generation and to pass on the body of Christian teaching to the generation to come.

4. For discussion

Agree or Disagree? One with the gift of teaching should be able to teach any age group.

D. ENCOURAGEMENT (Rom. 12:8)

1. What this gift is

From the Greek word parakaleo: to call to one's side with the idea of urging, appealing (Rom. 12:1), comforting, or encouraging (2 Cor. 1:3-5)

Look at 1 John 2:1; John 14:16; and 2 Cor. 1:3-5, noting especially the progression in the 2 Corinthians passage.

2. Definition

The gift of **encouragement** is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to bring words of comfort and consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel helped and healed.

A possible distinction between the gift of exhortation and the gift of shepherding:

exhortation: more short-term and crisis oriented

shepherding: covers a longer period of time through all kinds of situations

3. A biblical example: Barnabas

Meaning of this nickname (Acts 4:36): Son of Encouragement

Possible reason why the apostles called him by this name:

Encouraged the apostles to accept Paul (Acts 9:26,27)

Encouraged the new Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:20-26)

Encouraged John Mark (Acts 15:36-39; 2 Tim. 4:11)

4. For discussion

a. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements (give reason(s) for your answer)?

1) A Christian should go only to a fellow Christian for counseling.

2) To be a successful counselor one need only be a good listener.

3) Those with the gift of encouragement should seek out those having problems.

b. What are some ways by which those with the gift of encouragement might put that gift to use in the congregation? In this connection, how practical would it be for a congregation to conduct a training program for lay counselors?

E. THE WORD OF WISDOM AND THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE (1 Cor. 12:8)

Note: St. Paul does not define these gifts. Pentecostals and charismatics today define "the word (Greek logos) of" as a special revelation from God to an individual through which God imparts a special bit of knowledge (e.g., of some person's special need) or a needed bit of wisdom (e.g., how to handle some difficult situation). It seems, though, that this is the way the

Scriptures speak of the gift of prophecy. These two gifts can, however, have a different meaning. "The word of knowledge" and "the word of wisdom" can simply mean the ability to speak with knowledge and with wisdom. As such, they fit into the category of speaking gifts and are among those the Lord still gives to his Church today. This is the way we are treating them in what follows.

1. The gifts defined

"the word of" = the ability to speak with

"knowledge" = information

"wisdom" = the right use of information to achieve proper ends

We look to Jesus as the source of all true wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Pet. 3:18).

For the ability to speak with wisdom and knowledge, we therefore need to turn to the Holy Scriptures which testify of Jesus (John 5:39)

Definitions:

The gift of the word of knowledge is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to understand correctly and to communicate clearly the great truths God has hidden in his Word.

The gift of the word of wisdom is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to relate and apply the truths of the Word to specific needs and problems of life.

2. Distinctions

a. between the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom

knowledge: the ability to recognize and communicate the important and key facts of Scripture as a result of careful investigation

wisdom: the ability to apply these spiritual insights to specific situations

b. between the gift of teaching and the gifts of the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom

knowledge and wisdom: discovers spiritual facts and insights

teaching: passes on to others in learnable form these facts and insights and impresses them upon their minds and hearts

3. For discussion

- a. How might one with the gift of the word of knowledge serve in the Church today?
- b. How might one with the gift of the word of wisdom serve?
- c. Most Christians, it appears, have more than one spiritual gift (a "gift-mix"). With what other gifts might the gifts of the word of knowledge and/or the word of wisdom fit?
- d. Which of these six spiritual gifts--evangelism, shepherding, teaching, exhortation, word of wisdom, word of knowledge-- must the pastor have (cf 1 Tim. 3:2)? What does a congregation do about the gifts he doesn't have?

F. SUMMARY

The gifts of evangelism, shepherding, teaching and encouraging, together with the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, are alike in this respect: All are primarily speaking gifts. All involve the use, not just of words, but of the Word by which the Lord brings to faith, strengthens in the faith, guides, directs, protects, admonishes, corrects, comforts, encourages. Having gifts, let us use them! It is the way by which Christ keeps his Body, the Church, strong as we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly and then "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom," all of this "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:16,17)

Trinity Lutheran Church
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The Holy Spirit and His Gifts (Part IV)

Serving Gifts

Setting Our Sights

This is the second of two parts in which we are focusing on those gifts mentioned in the Scriptures which the Holy Spirit is still giving to members of the Church today. In the previous study our attention was centered on what have been called the speaking gifts, those gifts which emphasize words more than actions. We proceed now to look at the serving gifts, which do not exclude speaking, but which emphasize deeds more than words.

A. SERVING (Rom. 12:7)

1. What the gift is

Romans 12:7 - from diakonia (deacon) = service (especially of those who execute the commands of others)

Definition:

The gift of serving is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to work within the Church in any supportive role.

See 1 Timothy 3:8-13 - the office of deacon and the gift of serving (similar to the office of pastor and gift of shepherding, office of evangelist and gift of evangelism)

2. Biblical example: Acts 6:1-6 -- The Seven "Deacons"

The result of the service of these seven men (v. 7):
"The Word of God kept spreading."

One key purpose for the gift of serving: To make it possible for others to carry out the ministry of the Word.

3. For discussion

- a. How can one develop in the congregation a recognition that serving in a supportive role is no less vital a function than leading?
- b. Church growth research indicates that for every 100 members of a congregation there should be 55 tasks or roles available. Of what value would this be? How close does our congregation come to this ratio?
- c. What is our congregation's mechanism for getting new members involved in the ongoing work of the congregation? If it needs to be improved, what suggestions do you have?

B. GIVING (Rom. 12:8)

1. Biblical examples

The early Christians (Acts 4:32-37)

The Macedonian Christians (2 Cor. 8:1-5)

The poor widow (Mark 12:41-44)

These all gave "with liberality" (Rom. 12:8)

2. Definition

The gift of giving is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute with extraordinary generosity of their material resources to the work of the Lord.

3. For discussion

- a. How might one discover if he or she has the gift of giving?
- b. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements (give reason(s) for your answer):
 - 1) A wealthy person is more likely to have the gift of giving than a poor person.
 - 2) It is good stewardship for the church to concentrate on finding wealthy people with the gift of giving since a wealthy person can benefit the church more than can a poor person with that gift.

- 3) One who doesn't have the gift of giving can hardly be expected to tithe.

C. LEADERSHIP (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

1. The words for leadership

Rom. 12:8 - prohistemi - to stand in front of, be over, superintend, preside over (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4,12; 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12)

Heb. 13:7,17,24 - hegeomai - to go before, lead, rule, command, have authority over

1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7 - episkopos - overseer, one charged to see that things to be done by others are done rightly

2. Qualifications for leadership in the church

1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9 -
+ not a new convert
+ good family life
+ good reputation within the church
+ good reputation outside the church

1 Thess. 5:12 - a worker

Rom. 12:8 - diligent

1 Pet. 5:3 - leads by example, not coercion

1 Tim. 2:12 - doesn't overturn God's order for man and woman

3. Biblical examples

Joshua (Josh. 24:15)

Nehemiah (Neh. 1 & 2)

4. Definition

The gift of leadership is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to oversee various aspects of the work of the Church in such a way that

their vision and example serve as an inspiration for others to follow.

5. For discussion

- a. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement (give reason(s) for your answer)?

A congregation can expect that its pastor will have the gift of leadership and vision.

If you disagree with this statement, explain how the gap will be filled.

- b. What criteria should a congregation use in choosing its leaders?

D. ADMINISTRATION (1 Cor. 12:28)

1. The word for administration: kybernesis, helmsman (Acts 27:11)

Guides ship on the course the ship's owner has determined.

An administrator sees to it that what others have determined is accomplished.

2. Biblical examples of administration

Moses and Jethro (Ex. 18:13-27)

The Apostles (Acts 6:1-6)

One key need of an administrator: The ability to delegate.

3. Definition

The gift of administration is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to organize, delegate, and motivate people in such a way that what needs to be done gets done.

4. For discussion

What place is there in a congregation for women with gifts of leadership and administration?

E. SHOWING MERCY (Rom. 12:8) - HELPS (1 Cor. 12:28)

1. The words describing this gift

Rom. 12:8 - eleeo - to have mercy, compassion; feel sympathy, pity

Examples of its use: Syro-Phoenician woman (15:22); Unmerciful servant (18:33); Gerasene demoniac (Mk. 5:19); Rich man in hell (Lk. 16:24); God, who is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4); Paul (1 Tim. 1:13)

Mercy (eleos) is sympathy for the afflicted that shows itself, not only in words, but in cheerful actions

1 Cor. 12:28 - antilempsis - taking someone's part, helping, coming to the aid of

Examples of its use: Lk. 1:54; Acts 20:35

Its emphasis: deeds, helping those who can't help themselves

2. Definition

The gift of showing mercy (helps) is the divine endowment given to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine compassion for suffering individuals and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done, Christ-like deeds that help to alleviate the suffering.

The difference between the gift of showing mercy and of encouragement:

encouragement: helping with words

mercy: helping with deeds

3. For discussion

- a. What vocations might those with this gift gravitate toward?
- b. How might our congregation give its members who have the gift of showing mercy opportunity for using this gift?

F. FAITH (1 Cor. 12:9)

1. Meaning: Not saving faith, which every Christian has, but 1 Cor. 13:2: Faith that moves mountains (vision)

2. Definition

The gift of **faith** is the divine endowment of vision given to certain members of the Body of Christ, the ability to see something that needs to be done and to believe that God will do it even if it looks impossible.

3. For discussion

a. What is the difference between trusting God and tempting God?

b. How does a congregation determine whether it should follow one who challenges it to "do the impossible" for God?

c. Why does this gift need to be used in conjunction with love (1 Cor. 13:2)?

G. SUMMARY

Serving gifts as they are put to use in the congregation cover the wide range from the presidency of the congregation (gift of leadership) to participating in a congregational work day (gift of serving). The church prospers when each serves faithfully in accordance with the spiritual gifts with which he or she has been blessed.

A Final Word

The Bible's teaching about spiritual gifts fits in squarely with the Bible's teaching about the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian, not just the pastor, has a ministry to perform. Every Christian, not just the pastor, is equipped by God for ministry through the gifts of the Spirit. Every part of the Body has a vital function to perform. "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" (Rom. 12:6). May each of us faithfully use our gifts "so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12) "that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:11).

To that help us, dear Father in heaven. Accept us, our hearts and lives, our bodies and souls, our spiritual gifts, as thankofferings returned to You in gratitude for the greatest gift of all--Jesus.

David J. Valleskey