

## The Gifts and the Fruit of the Spirit

The gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit are both supernatural expressions of God and intended to encourage and comfort the body of Christ, but they are different in many respects. The Bible describes the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). The Bible describes the gifts of the Spirit as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, special faith, healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, various kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Some additional spiritual gifts, such as the gifts of leadership, teaching and service, are also addressed in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

### **God Wants the Church to Have Both Gifts and Fruit**

Because of unbelief, ignorance and disobedience, the church has two common problems concerning the spiritual gifts – either a lack of use of the gifts or a misuse of the gifts. Both these problems would be solved if Christians truly believed they had died with Christ and no longer relied on their natural abilities and church traditions to do God’s work but instead trusted solely in Christ to sovereignly live through them. Many Christians pursue fruit but neglect the gifts. However, from God’s perspective it is not a matter of one or the other, He wants us to desire both the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The Bible says, “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:10).” When Christians lack spiritual fruit, the church is sick but when Christians lack spiritual gifts, the church is not strengthened. Since our warfare is not against mortal men but against the spiritual forces of darkness, our equipment, tools and weapons must also be spiritual; otherwise we will not prevail (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). The apostle Paul instructed, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant (1 Corinthians 12:1).”

Although there may be various interpretations on the meaning of specific gifts, there is no question that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are valid today. Arguments against the use of the spiritual gifts are normally not based on Biblical grounds but instead on a fear of abuse of the gifts (which the apostle Paul effectively deals with in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14). There is no Scriptural support to suggest that the gifts were only for the first century or that the gifts were only intended for men or leaders. The apostle Peter, citing the prophet Joel, declared, “And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy... even on My bondslaves, *both men and women*, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17-18).” The Bible clearly states that the Holy Spirit distributes the spiritual gifts to every believer for effective ministry to the church and effective evangelism to the world (Acts 4:29-30; 14:3; 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12). “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing *to each one individually* just as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11).” The Bible says that the spiritual gifts are given to every believer to comfort, encourage and strengthen the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:3, 26). Paul wrote, “*To each one* is given the manifestation of the

Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7).” If we reject the Holy Spirit’s gifts or misuse them, we reject God’s will and divine provision and tools for equipping His church. The body of Christ will then suffer as a result our unbelief and disobedience and God will ultimately hold us responsible.

### **The Gifts and Fruit Are Different in Nature and Purpose**

A major difference between the two is found in the nature of spiritual fruit compared to the gifts. The fruit of the Spirit are attributes of God’s divine character; whereas the gifts of the Spirit are instruments of God’s divine power. The gifts are the supernatural operation and manifestation of the Holy Spirit who distributes them to each member of the body of Christ *according to His own will* (1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4). For example, when the elders of the church laid hands on Timothy, the Holy Spirit gave him a spiritual gift, perhaps the gift of teaching (1 Timothy 4:13), which was confirmed through a prophetic message (1 Timothy 4:14). It is important to note that all the gifts are distributed by the initiative of the Holy Spirit and not by man’s will. “So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith (Galatians 3:5)?” Therefore, in order to exercise the gifts of the Spirit properly, we must be submitted to Christ’s authority and act only in obedience to His initiative (John 15:5). Jesus Himself never said or did anything on His own initiative; He only acted on His Father’s initiative (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49). That God’s will and initiative is required to *properly* exercise the spiritual gifts is also evident by the apostle Peter’s instruction on prophecy: “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men *moved by the Holy Spirit* spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21).”

### **Both the Gifts and Fruit Are Supernaturally Imparted**

Just as the fruit of the Spirit is not the same as naturally endowed virtues; the gifts of the Spirit are not naturally endowed abilities. All of the gifts of the Spirit are supernaturally endowed; they are not the product of natural effort or education. It is not the intention of this teaching to define the characteristics of the individual gifts; however, all of the spiritual gifts are either described or displayed by the apostles in the Book of Acts. In every case, the results that the spiritual gifts produce are far superior than anything we could ever achieve with our natural ability. For example, someone may be a naturally eloquent speaker but that doesn’t mean the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them the supernatural gift of teaching. Furthermore, natural eloquence can never produce the spiritual results that can only come from the Holy Spirit and His gift of teaching. Or, someone may be a natural born leader, but this does not mean the Holy Spirit has given them the gift of spiritual leadership. And the Holy Spirit’s gift of prophecy is definitely not the same as someone’s “inspirational” sermon. Unfortunately, due to spiritual ignorance and unbelief about the gifts, many people are following teachers who are speaking from their own natural wisdom and ability rather than from the revelatory and enabling gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Gifts and Fruit Are Produced Differently**

Another major difference between the spiritual gifts and fruit is how they are imparted. Whereas the gifts of the Spirit are received spontaneously by an act of faith; the fruit of the Spirit are produced over time by abiding or persevering faith (Luke 8:15). One brother in Christ has compared this to the difference between a fruit tree and a Christmas tree. Fruit is formed slowly over time by being vitally connected to the life of the tree; whereas Christmas ornaments are like gifts, which are placed on the tree by a single act in a single instant of time. The Bible says “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).” This means the gifts are not loaned out and then recalled. If someone falls away from the faith and becomes carnal and ungodly, their ability to use the gifts will not cease. For example, even though King Saul became rebellious, ungodly and depraved, he still prophesied (1 Samuel 19:18-24). Consequently, the gifts do not necessarily reflect the spiritual character and sanctification of the person who exercises them; whereas fruit is an expression of that person’s character and sanctification. As result, the great danger for Christians who exercise the gifts is for them to think and feel they are more “spiritual” than they really are. For this reason and because of the different nature and function of spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts, the gifts can often be misused by someone who is soulish and carnal. For example, the Corinthian church abounded in the spiritual gifts but sorely lacked in spiritual fruit since they remained very carnal minded (1 Corinthians 1:7; 3:1-3; 11:17-32). Their failure to be convicted that they were spiritually carnal and lawless even though they exercised the spiritual gifts is a sobering warning to all of us.

## **You Shall Know Them by Their Fruit Not Their Gifts**

Whenever Christians are more impressed with dramatic gifts rather than authentic fruit, there are major problems. We need to always keep in mind Jesus’ warning, “You shall know them by their fruit.” He did not say, “You shall know them by their gifts.” Nor did He say, “You shall know them by their outward moral behavior.” There is a great difference between man-made morality, which is naturally born and developed, and the fruit of the Spirit, which is only spiritually formed and grows from out of our sanctification to Christ. Morality apart from the cross of Christ is not true sanctification: it is just another version of the flesh. It is very important to know that exercising the spiritual gifts can be dangerous and backfire if you are not walking in sanctification (holiness). If you are not walking in sanctification, God cannot protect you from Satan’s schemes to deceive and attack you when you function in the supernatural realm. The only way we can safely function in the spiritual gifts is if we are submitted to Christ’s sovereignty and hear and obey His voice. And the only way we can be truly submitted to Christ’s authority is if we know (believe and act on) the truth that we have been crucified with Christ and our sinful nature has been removed from us (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20).

## God Holds Us Accountable For Both Our Fruit and Gifts

God will hold us accountable for everything He has given us, including the spiritual gifts. Therefore, we should desire to fully use the spiritual gifts as His responsible stewards for the good of His body, the church. We do not want to be like the slave who refused to do anything with what his master gave him. Jesus Christ judged this slave wicked, lazy and worthless (Matthew 25:26-30; Luke 19:22). It is a serious and grievous matter to refuse any gift which God wants to give us and for which His Son died. This includes the gift of salvation, the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and all the spiritual gifts, which God has given every believer for building up the body of Christ. However, we must pursue holiness and love to ensure that we use the spiritual gifts safely and properly; otherwise Christ's Judgment will also be severe. Jesus warned that He would reject many in the Day of Judgment who exercised the spiritual gifts even while they willfully and habitually practiced sin (Matthew 7:21-23). This is why it is imperative that we "pursue sanctification without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)." The spiritual gifts, which are instruments or tools, will cease at the end of this age but the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which express Christ's character, will remain forever (1 Corinthians 13:8). Therefore, without the fruit of the Spirit in evidence, the use of the gifts has no eternal value. The gifts, which are exercised by faith, must always function in love to have any spiritual worth (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). The apostle Paul taught, "Faith works through love (Galatians 5:6)." And the apostle Peter exhorted, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Therefore, God's desire is that all Christians would exercise His spiritual gifts in His love to build up His church.

## The New Covenant Priesthood of Believers

Under the New Covenant, all believers constitute God's priesthood who together are responsible for the "work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12)." However, in most churches today the work of the ministry is performed primarily by *professional, salaried clergy* who are paid by the rest of the church members, who are considered just support *lay people*. Since many, if not most, of these pastors do not have the Lord's spiritual authority, they direct and control church affairs by their own religious authority. Jesus hated this man-made hierarchy and Spirit-quenching dichotomy of clergy and laity, which He called Nicolaitanism (Greek for *lording it over the people*) (Revelation 2:6, 15-16). In true Christianity, there is true spiritual authority: the Holy Spirit raises up spiritually mature men (*elders, who are non-salaried*) from among the flock who together help the Lord shepherd His church, but the Bible also says that the Holy Spirit gives *each member* of the body of Christ a special function or spiritual gift to equip them to minister together to the whole church. It is God's intent that whenever His church meets under Christ's headship, each member should be able to freely share their spiritual gifts with the body of Christ as the Holy Spirit directs them. Paul taught, "Since we have gifts that differ according the grace given to us, *each of us* is to exercise them accordingly (Romans 12:6)." Thus the Bible says that when the body of Christ meets together under Christ's

headship, one member might share a psalm, another member a prophecy, another member a teaching, and another member might share tongues and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:26). This functioning priesthood of all believers is one of the fundamental building blocks of Christ's church. "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house as *a holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9)."

To use another metaphor, God intends that Jesus Christ would be like the head "orchestra leader and conductor" of His church. Therefore, whenever we come together in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, every member of the body should fix their eyes on Jesus their head. The Holy Spirit will then spontaneously prompt each member, as individual instruments of "Christ's orchestra," to share their spiritual gifts in proper order for the good of the whole body (1 Corinthians 14:40). When Jesus is the "head conductor" of church, our gathering together and ministering to one another will be creatively directed by the Holy Spirit who will produce a spiritual "symphony" to supply the needs of the whole body of Christ. To this end, Paul wrote, "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, *according to the proper working of each individual part*, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16)." In this way, all the members actively participate in building up the body of Christ so that the church as a whole can fulfill God's eternal purpose - to express the fullness of Jesus Christ.

### **We Must Abide in Christ to Have Both Good Fruit and Gifts**

In closing, we manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit the same way we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit - by faith in Jesus Christ and His words and works. As the apostle Paul said, "So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:5)." Therefore, we can exercise the spiritual gifts by faith according to the grace that the Holy Spirit has given each of us (Romans 12:6). We exercise the gifts by trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit and not relying on our natural ability (1 Peter 4:11). In order to properly exercise the gifts of the Spirit, we must abide (stay united by faith) in Jesus Christ and in His death and resurrection. If we do not abide in Christ and His completed work on the cross, we will not be properly submitted to Christ's headship and we will not bear the fruit of sanctification. Our functioning in the gifts will then be in vain or, even worse, spiritually lawless (John 15:4-6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Therefore, it is essential that we believe and act on the truth that we have died with Christ and our sinful nature has been removed from us so that He can sovereignly live through us (Galatians 2:20). This is the way Jesus Christ will be able to sanctify us as His bondservants and enrich us with both His spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts for the building up of His body. "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21)."

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