

## **The Mystery of the Holy Spirit**

### **The Holy Spirit and Miracles**

#### *Lecture 10*

There are four basic views about how the Holy Spirit is working in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Pentecostal, Third Wave, open but cautious and cessationist. The view our church holds to is cessationist. This does not mean that we think the Holy Spirit has ceased. Quite the opposite. We believe this is the Age of the Spirit, and we anticipate the working of the Spirit in powerful and extraordinary ways. But we do not view tongues as proof of the Spirit's presence, we do not expect God to verify messengers by giving them power to heal, nor do we seek new revelation from God – because we believe the sufficient and authoritative Bible has been complete with 66 books for nearly 2000 years.

The cessationist view is not a new or novel view. It is the historical view as long as it does not become extremist – and I admit that it sometimes is extremist within our independent Baptist movement. By extremist, I mean that the work of the Holy Spirit today is played down.

In contrast to the centuries-old tradition of cessationism, Pentecostalism, is only about 120 years old. The Third Wave is no more than 30 years old. And the open but cautious view is even more recent. These three combined are called continuationism because they hold that the phenomenon of Pentecost is repeated every day through tongues, miracles, healings and revelations.

But we don't want to be distracted by these differences. In actual fact, on the scholarship level, there is more in common between these four evangelical views than differences. Tonight we want to concentrate on the commonality.

### **The Primary Works of the Holy Spirit**

Because miraculous gifts are the point of controversy, most attention is given to them. This is unfortunate. Even if these gifts were for today, the Bible clearly indicates that these could not be the primary work of the Spirit. The primary work is agreed to by all four views: saving, sanctifying, filling and gifting.

#### **Salvation**

As we have previously learned in this study, the Holy Spirit plays an essential role in salvation. He convicts the sinner of sin, and then enables the sinner to repent and express faith. He is also the agent of life in regeneration.

#### **Sanctification**

When His divine and holy life becomes ours, we are naturally set apart as new creations (2 Cor 5.17). This indwelling is initiated at the time of salvation – and is also called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is because the Holy Spirit dwells within believers that their bodies are called the temple of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Filling**

This work of the Spirit is not uniformly understood. What some Pentecostal/charismatics call baptism, other views would call filling. What is the filling of the Holy Spirit and how is it effected?

## *Definition*

The filling of the Holy Spirit is being under His divine control to the extent that our thoughts, words and actions emanate from His holy will. The effect is that we effortlessly express the character qualities of God – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. I say “effortless” because the Holy Spirit exhibits these qualities in and through us – we do not conjure these characteristics up on our own. Beyond the fruit of the Spirit that results from filling, the control of the Spirit brings divine enablement to testify and serve in an effective manner . . . to the glory of God.

We encounter the filling of the Spirit in varying circumstances in the book of Acts.

### *For testifying*

Acts 4:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

### *In answer to prayer*

Acts 4:31 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup>And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

### *For courage*

Acts 7:55 (NKJV)

<sup>55</sup>But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,

### *A reputation*

Acts 6:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

### *For fruitful service*

Acts 11:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup>For he [Barnabas] was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

## *Practice*

Filling is something God commands of us, therefore, it is something we must seek purposely on a continuing and daily basis. Some commentators say that this means we must make a habit of asking God to fill us – otherwise we are not filled. While I see the point that asking is an expression of seeking, I don’t think it is some sort of magic formula: “Ask in the right way and receive the holy power”. I do intentionally ask God to fill me on occasion, nevertheless, I think the primary action in seeking to be filled is not asking, but rather obeying. The filling is not a mystical infusion of divinity; it is God’s practical control over the believer which is actually a cooperative between His power and our obedience.

To illustrate this, I have often used the analogy of a glass full of water. If there are rocks in the glass, the water will still be to the brim, but the glass is not full of water. To be full, the rocks must be removed and the water topped up. So it is with the Holy Spirit. When we have sin latent in our life,

we cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit. Sin acts as a rocky obstruction displacing His holy control. But if we confess our sin, He forgives and cleanses so that the capacity of the Holy Spirit reaches capacity.

This is not a perfect analogy, of course. In reality, we never have less of the Holy Spirit indwelling us, as the metaphor of a glass with rocks might suggest. Wayne Grudem uses a balloon as an analogy. If you blow into a balloon, it is full of air. But if you blow into the same balloon, it will expand even more and still be full of air.

Believers always have a full measure of the Holy Spirit because He indwells us. But the measure can be fuller as we yield obediently like a balloon to more of His expansiveness.

The essential activity is to seek His filling – by submissive obedience to the Holy Spirit’s instruction through the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**,

This verse could be translated, be continually being filled with the Spirit. It is a continuous action – to be sought daily through submissive obedience, and it can be through prayer.

When we are filled, the results will follow as in Ephesians 5. We will express thanks and praise to God (v 19-20); we will submit to other people – preferring them above ourselves (v 21); we will have right relationships in the home (vv 22-33; 6.1-4) and at work (6.5-9); and we will have victory over the oppressive activity of the Evil One (6.12ff).

The filling of the Spirit is the means by which God’s character (fruit) is exhibited in us and God’s ministry is performed through us. We must submit to His filling, otherwise we grieve Him.

Ephesians 4:30 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

## Gifting

The Holy Spirit edifies the body of Christ through its members. He provides to each member special enablement to build up others. This is done sovereignly – so that every church has the complement of gifts needed to be healthy and growing.

## Gifts

There are a few places in the New Testament where spiritual gifts are listed. These can be categorised as word gifts and deed gifts. All are essential and equally valuable to the church.

Romans 12:4-8 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in **one body**, but all the members do not have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so we, *being* many, are **one body** in Christ, and individually members of one another.<sup>6</sup> 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;<sup>7</sup> or **ministry**, *let us use it in our ministering*; he who teaches, in **teaching**;<sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in **exhortation**; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup>There are diversities of gifts, but the **same Spirit**. <sup>5</sup>There are differences of ministries, but the **same Lord**. <sup>6</sup>And there are diversities of activities, but it is the **same God** who works all in all.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup>for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healings** by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup>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**.

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup>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**.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup>And He Himself gave some *to be* **apostles**, some **prophets**, some **evangelists**, and some **pastors and teachers**, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup>But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. <sup>8</sup>And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *“love will cover a multitude of sins.”* <sup>9</sup>Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup>As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup>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, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It is probable that these lists are not meant to be exhaustive – otherwise there would be uniformity between them. Also, given Paul’s analogy of the gifts to body parts (1 Cor 12.12-26), the gifts are probably permanent – implanted at the moment of salvation.

### **Talents**

Sometimes talent is confused with spiritual giftedness. All people are born with . . . or develop over time . . . certain talents and abilities. Music is an obvious example. But these are not the same as spiritual gifts. For one thing, many unbelievers have these abilities.

Spiritual gifts are enablements from God to serve the local church. It has been said, you are born with talent, and born again with spiritual gifts.

### **Practice**

Many people make the mistake of thinking they cannot serve God until they discover their gift(s). Actually, the opposite is the right approach. Serve God and then you and others will naturally observe how God is using you to be a blessing. This may be something that can be labelled from one of the lists quoted above, or it may not. The label is unimportant.

Text	Office Gifts	Word Gifts	Deed Gifts
1 Cor 12.28; Eph 4.11	Apostle		
1 Cor 12.10, 28; Eph 4.11; Rom 12.6	Prophet	Prophecy (preaching)	
1 Cor 12.28; Eph 4.11; Rom 12.7	Pastor-Teacher	Teaching	
Eph 4.11	Evangelist		
1 Cor 12.10, 28			Miracles
1 Cor 12.9, 28			Healing
1 Cor 12.28			Helps
1 Cor 12.28			Administration
1 Cor 12.10, 28		Tongues	
1 Cor 12.10		Interpretation of tongues	
1 Cor 12.8		Word of wisdom	
1 Cor 12.8		Word of knowledge	
1 Cor 12.9			Faith
1 Cor 12.10		Distinguishing spirits	
Rom 12.7; 1 Pet 4.11			Serving
Rom 12.8			Encouraging
Rom 12.8			Giving
Rom 12.8			Leadership
Rom 12.8			Mercy
1 Pet 4.11			Speaking

### *Purpose*

The essential part about gifts is that God gives them for the edification of the church until Christ comes. Therefore, every believer must be committed to faithful attendance at church and diligent service to the church. The giftedness then takes care of itself.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the **profit of all**:

The focus on others that is central to spiritual gifts is underscored by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Corinthians 12:31 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> But earnestly **desire the best gifts**. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> And now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

### *Summary*

There are many kinds of gifts, and many ways to express each gift (for example, giving can be money, or a baked dinner, or an hour a week tutoring a disadvantaged child). Diversity, yet unity in love is the theme for spiritual gifts.

No gift is more important than another. The issue is not what you have, but how you use it. The exercise of each gift must be according to faith in God, and love for the church.

	Cessationism	Open but Cautious	Third Wave	Pentecostal/charismatic
<b>Date of Origin</b>	Historic position of Christianity	1990s	1980s	1901 and renewed in 1960s and 1970s
<b>Baptism of Holy Spirit</b>	Coincides with salvation	Coincides with salvation	Coincides with salvation	An experience subsequent to salvation
<b>Tongues</b>	Ceased when the New Testament canon was completed.	May be a private prayer language. Not sought above other gifts.	Should be sought as a sign and enablement for the gospel today.	Should be sought as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and practised to deepen one's spirituality.
<b>Miracles and Healings</b>	Ceased with the completion of the New Testament.	May still be given by God, but not as is practiced by faith healers.	Should be sought to convince unbelievers and to bind the work of Satan.	A sign verifying the gospel today – and bringing kingdom relief to suffering people.
<b>Prophecy definition</b>	Infallible revelations from God. After the completion of the New Testament canon, this gift was redundant.	Infallible (or fallible) revelations from God that speak to specific contemporary matters and supplement the Bible.	Infallible revelations from God that speak to specific contemporary matters and supplement the Bible.	Infallible (or fallible) revelations from God that speak to specific contemporary matters. May include revelations about God that go beyond what is known from the Bible alone.
<b>Prophecy practice</b>	Study the Bible with careful grammatical-historical hermeneutics – and in dependence on the Holy Spirit to illumine – proclaim and apply the text to contemporary life.	Study the Bible with careful hermeneutics and in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Accept prophecies if compatible with the Bible.	Study the Bible with careful hermeneutics and in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Seek prophecies to be declared along with biblical truth.	Study the Bible and seek from the Holy Spirit prophecies to be declared along with biblical truth.

## Miracles and Healings

Does God do miracles today? Does God heal today? The answer is yes . . . even from a cessationist. But does God gift miracle workers and healers today? That answer is no – because the apostolic age in which the New Testament was being written has ceased.

Even continuationists are cessationists when the topic is apostleship. But they fail to follow the logic out to its end and rule out miracle workers and faith healers.

To begin our assessment of these phenomenal gifts, we must define miracles.

Miracles can be defined as “direct activity of God in the world”. By this definition, everything God does is a miracle . . . and every time a spiritual gift is utilised, it is a miracle. Thus, giving and teaching and compassion would all be miraculous gifts.

While this is true, it isn't very helpful to our discussion. It is best to define miracles as Wayne Grudem does in a narrow sense: "A less common activity of God in which He arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to Himself."<sup>1</sup>

There are two reasons to believe that the ministry of miracle workers and faith healers ceased with the apostolic age.

1. The specific record of the exercise of these gifts quickly declined after Pentecost.

### *Lame Beggar in Jerusalem*

Acts 3:6-8 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." <sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and **immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength**. <sup>8</sup> So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and **praising God**.

Acts 4:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been **healed** standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Acts 4:22 (NKJV)

<sup>22</sup> For the man was over forty years old on whom this **miracle of healing** had been performed.

### *Multitudes from Judea*

Acts 5:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

### *Many in Samaria*

Acts 8:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

### *Coastal Judea*

Acts 9:32-35 (NKJV)

<sup>32</sup> Now it came to pass, as Peter went through **all parts of the country**, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup> And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, **Jesus the Christ heals you**. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. <sup>35</sup> So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

### *Gentiles in Asia Minor*

Acts 14:8-10 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> And in **Lystra** a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. <sup>9</sup> This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be **healed**, <sup>10</sup> said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, **Systematic Theology**, p. 1027.

### *Gentiles in Malta (enroute to Rome)*

Acts 28:8-9 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and **healed** him. <sup>9</sup> So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

There are no incidents of healing recorded in the epistles. This makes sense in light of Hebrews 2.3b-4.

Hebrews 2:3-4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> . . . [that] which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed** to us by those who heard *Him*, <sup>4</sup> God also bearing witness both **with signs and wonders**, with various **miracles**, and gifts of the Holy Spirit . . .

It is no coincidence that the miracles recorded in the Acts follow the progression of the gospel according to Acts 1.8. . . and that miracles are not repeated once the gospel had progressed. No further validation (or 'confirmation' Heb 2.3) was necessary.

2. One of the earliest epistles speaks of healing – but not at the hands of faith healers.

Scholars agree that James is one of the earliest epistles. Isn't it curious, then, that James does not suggest that the sick call for a faith healer to work a miracle? Rather James suggests calling the elders (pastors) to pray.

James 5:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **elders** of the church, and let them **pray** over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Beyond these two biblical observations, we must add that the practice of miracle working and faith healing today – carried out in vast arenas by wealthy celebrity practitioners – is at odds with the examples in the Bible. Jesus Himself did not heal everyone. His healing ministry was clearly secondary to His saving and His teaching ministry.

The apostle John records the purpose for the limited miracles Jesus performed:

John 20:30-31 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Belief resulting in salvation is the greatest of miracles . . . and the greatest of healings. The good news is that God is still performing this miracle today.

In closing, I want to quote the statement Adelaide College of Ministries posts on their website on this issue of spiritual gifts and miracles. They say it better than I can.

We believe that spiritual gifts are divinely given and sovereignly distributed by the Holy Spirit to every member of the body of Christ. The purpose of these gifts is to glorify God and to edify the church to fulfil its divinely appointed task. There are gifts given to enable every believer to share in

the ministry of edification and growth of the church. Revelation is not ongoing, tongues are neither the sign of the baptism of the Spirit nor of spirituality, and Christ's atonement does not demand physical healing. The exercise of spiritual gifts must always be consistent with Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adelaide College of Ministries, <http://www.acm.sa.edu.au/beliefs#gifts>, accessed on 3 October 2010