

**Sermon Title:** Are the Gifts of the Spirit for today?

**WHY THIS MATTERS:** Often, we don't bring our beliefs and practices to their logical conclusions.

*If the gifts are for today, God gave them for a purpose. Thus, we need them to fulfill our purpose.*

*If the gifts have ceased, God caused them to cease. Thus, pursuing them is a distraction, or worse, from our purpose.*

**For example:** suppose I told you to build a house! What would you need? A blueprint, training, tools, and then hard work. What if I ONLY gave you a blueprint, but no tools? Would that be fair? Would that work? Or, I gave you tools, but NO blueprints? **In both cases, could you get something done? sure**

**PROBLEM:** The biggest problem people have with the gifts of the Spirit has less to do with theology and blueprints and more to do with people misusing the tools they were given, or replacing the blueprints with the tools (gifts replacing Scripture).

**The critical question for us today. What does the Bible say?**

Before we discuss specific gifts, such as prophecy, tongues, healing, signs, deliverance, and more, we need to ensure that we lay a foundation based not on our experience or lack thereof but on the teachings of Scripture.

### **A. Are the Gifts of the Spirit for today?**

There are two main camps, with subdivisions in each. Those who believe the Spirit and the gifts are still active within the Church today, and those who do not.

#### **1. Cessationists:** The Gifts of the Spirit ceased at the completion of Scripture

- Cessationists think that miraculous sign gifts have ceased.
- **They now divide into three viewpoints:**
  - **Full cessationists** – “hard cessationists”- reject anything supernatural. No post-biblical miracles or deliverance.
    - Hard Cessationism allowed people to accept biblical miracles without confronting the broader culture's skepticism.
  - **Classical cessationists** – God can perform miracles. But the supernatural gifts have ceased
    - God may speak to individuals, such as receiving a ‘call’ to some form of ministry or being ‘convicted’ by the Spirit. **REJECT prophecy, whispers, speaking gifts, etc.**
  - **Concentric cessationists** – The “softest” form of Cessationism believes that the miraculous gifts have ceased in the mainstream church and evangelized areas, but may appear in unreached areas as an aid to spreading the Gospel.

#### **2. Continualists:** The Gifts of the Spirit are for today.

- **Continualists generally include three groups:**

- **Charismatic:** Baptism of the Spirit occurs at conversion. Believers can lose the fullness of the Spirit and not live Spirit-empowered lives. The gifts of the Spirit are for the Church & Missions.
- **Pentecostal:** Baptism of the Spirit occurs after conversion & is accompanied by tongues.
- **Third Wave believers:** emphasize signs & wonders in advancing the Gospel.
- **“Extreme charismatics”:** Emphasize gifts & experience over Scripture. Over-realized eschatology. E.g. PROSPERITY GOSPEL
- **The first THREE form the fastest growing Church movement! 600 million & growing!**

### 3. Open but Cautious = Undecided

- a. Because of such debates, believers can fall into “We can’t know!” syndrome & become bystanders.
- b. Can be faithful to Scripture & Church – BUT live powerless lives – they may lean towards the Spirit, but don’t practice the gifts of the Spirit.

### **IMPORTANT: Abuses of the gifts are often used as a reason to reject or resist the Gifts of the Spirit.**

- Prosperity gospel exemplifies over-realized eschatology, leading people into a ditch.
- Calvinism – removes the doctrine of free will as GOD does everything. It leads people into a ditch.
- Cessationism overemphasizes the mind and knowing right doctrine over helping people encounter the life-giving Spirit that could encourage them, strengthen them, set them free, and radically change their lives.

Ironically, the biggest complaint cessationists have against Continuationists is the emphasis on experience! Yet, the largest arguments against the gifts are based on EXPERIENCE. Either a lack thereof, abuses, or fears that words from the Lord will replace Scripture.

### **DO NOT BECOME A BYSTANDER. Study, learn, APPLY, GROW! A – B – C – D!**

- J.I. Packer & Norm Geisler – I recommend reading their material! CESSATIONISTS.
- John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Sam Storms, D.A. Carson, & Craig Keener – CONTINUALISTS. (yet – I disagree with Calvinism)

### **Let’s practice Christian charity and grace to those with whom we disagree!**

**Southland Church:** Continuationists —Baptism of the Spirit happens at conversion. You can lose the fullness of the Spirit and not operate in the gifts and still be “saved.” However, you cannot fulfill the calling and purpose God has for you apart from the Spirit and the gifts He empowers in your life.

### **UNITY in the ESSENTIALS – GRACE in EVERYTHING ELSE.**

### **B. The Gifts of the Spirit are for TODAY!**

According to NT scholar Craig Keener, most evangelical biblical scholars in the U.S. are theological Continualists, in the sense that they believe that gifts continue, even though many might not practice them.

As mentioned, the fastest-growing churches in the world are ALL Continuationists.

**Did you know... There are over 155 verses in the NT that talk about spiritual gifts. (Sam Storms)**

- **30+ instructions given for prophetic instruction → APPARENTLY this was to be normative in the CHURCH (more in upcoming weeks)**

**1 Corinthians 12:1–11 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- Concerning spiritual gifts – Paul does NOT want the Church to be “uninformed.”
- There are MANY gifts – ALL empowered by the Spirit
- **“GIFTS”** Charismata (singular: charisma) are divine, grace-bestowed spiritual gifts, originating from the Greek charis (grace) and charisma (gift), primarily denoting extraordinary abilities given to Christians for building up the church and ministry.
- EVERY SINGLE BELIEVER is given a manifestation of the Spirit
- **Examples include:** wisdom, healing, prophecy, faith, miracles, interpretation, discernment of spirits, and tongues.
- **This does NOT mean every believer operates in the Gifts of the Spirit! SADLY NOT! BUT the tools are AVAILABLE.**

**Church → DO NOT BUY INTO THE NATURALISTIC WORLDVIEW!! Too many Christians are doing this!**

**Church → REALITY CHECK: We live in a SUPERNATURAL world. There is the physical realm AND the spiritual realm!**

**Ephesians 4:11–14 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

- GAVE – present tense – NOT past: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers.
- WHY? Equip the SAINTS (Church)
- UNTIL? We ALL attain unity of the faith, knowledge in Christ, MATURITY, etc. Has this happened? NO!

**Acts 2:16-21 (NIV)** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.<sup>1</sup>

- Joel spoke of an age to come – Peter identifies the Church age as that time.

**The New Testament states “the last days” began with the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

**The “last days” refer to the time period between Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.**

**C. The Church (ME & YOU) Needs the Spirit & His Gifts! (Charismata)**

**Acts 2:38-39 (NIV) Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."**

**We cannot fulfill our calling & purpose apart from the Spirit & His gifts!**

**In this life... we face the impossible! E.g., sickness, sin, addiction, mental health issues, rejection, persecution, and more! We are called to pick up our cross and follow Jesus! We are invited to know Him and the TRUTH that sets us free! We are invited to partner with Him in building His Church and discipling our families! WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE!**

**What are YOU facing today? What impossible situation?**

**A SPIRITLESS Church is a POWERLESS Church. A SPIRITLESS Person is a POWERLESS person.**

**MODIFIED PRAYER: (Acts 4:24–31) “Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David, the Prophets, and the Apostles. Now, Lord, consider the days we live in, the struggles we face, the weakness inherent in us, and grant us Your Spirit to empower us to minister, break free from sin, persevere through hardship, and speak Your word with great boldness. While you stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”**