

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

THE MIRACULOUS GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (1 COR. 12-14)

By Shane Carrington

We have confidence in the Bible as the written word of God because He used miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit to reveal and confirm the word in the first century.

Introduction

“I wish God would speak to me. I have a lot of questions!”

In reality, God has spoken to us! He communicated directly with some first-century disciples. This is called inspiration. He speaks to us today through the written word. This is called revelation (cf. Eph. 3:2-5). To hear Him today, we must open His book and study. This is called edification.

The Variety and Purposes of Miraculous Gifts

In the Old Testament Scriptures, God revealed Himself *“to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways”* (Heb. 1:1). For us today, God, *“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son”* (Heb. 1:2a). As God revealed Himself in the New Testament era, *“it [the gospel, sc] was at the first spoken through the Lord”* and *“was confirmed to us by those who heard [the apostles, sc], God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will”* (Heb. 2:3-4). The Father, Son, and Spirit revealed God’s powerful plan (Rom. 1:16) through the use of miraculous gifts distributed to certain disciples.

While these are categorized both as *“signs and wonders and . . . various miracles”* (Heb. 2:4; cf. Acts 2:22; 2 Cor. 12:12) and *“gifts of the Holy Spirit”* (Heb. 2:4), these gifts serve two primary purposes:

to reveal God’s word by inspiration (Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 3:3-5).

to confirm God’s word by authenticating both the messengers who spoke/wrote (Heb. 2:3-4)-and the message God that manifested through them (Heb. 2:1-4).

Since we cannot read God’s mind, He had to reveal His word by inspiring people to make it known (1 Cor. 2:9-13). This ensured the accuracy and completeness of God’s revealed message to us. Furthermore, God gave us confidence in the inspired writers and the resulting *“sword of the Spirit”* (Eph. 6:17) which they wielded by empowering them with the ability to work miracles (Heb. 2:2-4). That is why God gave those gifts.

God gave a variety of gifts, and Paul enumerates several. The most extensive context discussing them is 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Chapter 12 lists many of these gifts (12:8-10, 28-30) and reveals that they came from the same source: the Spirit, Jesus, and the Father (12:4-6). The Holy Spirit is given special credit for being the source of miraculous gifts nine times in the first eleven verses of this chapter (cf. John 16:7-15). These gifts came from One source and were intended to unify the entire body of believers (12:12-26; cf. 1:10-17).

Chapter 13 emphasizes that love is the right motivation for using miraculous gifts (13:1-13) – while also revealing their temporary nature (13:8-12).

Chapter 14 describes the Corinthians’ misuse of miraculous gifts (especially tongues), lists regulations concerning the use of these gifts, and emphasizes the unity God wants among His people (cf. 14:4-5, 12, 19, 26-33, 40).

Jesus’s Promises to the Apostles

Jesus used a variety of expressions to make promises to the apostles about the days in which they would be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Note a few of these sayings that are found in John's gospel:

the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you (John 14:26).

When the Helper comes . . . the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me (John 15:26).

The Helper will . . . come to you . . . to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-8).

He will guide you into all the truth . . . I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you (John 16:13-15).

He breathed on them and said to them, ***“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained”*** (John 20:22-23; cf. 16:7-15).

Consequently, John writes, ***“Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”*** (John 20:30-31).

The world needs to know God's will, and the Holy Spirit inspired both apostles and prophets to reveal and record that message (Eph. 3:3-5).

The Beginning (and End) of Reception

In the pages of the New Testament, we discover that God gave miraculous powers in two ways:

Directly through Spirit baptism — described as only occurring on two occasions (Acts 2 & 10).

Indirectly through the laying on of hands by an apostle — described most notably in Acts 8 (vv. 6-7, 18-19), though it happened many times (cf. Acts 19:6).

By *directly*, we mean that the Holy Spirit directly came upon the apostles, empowering them. By *indirectly*, we mean that the Holy Spirit empowered others through an apostle laying hands on them. Are these two means still available today? No.

Holy Spirit baptism ceased to be available by the time Paul wrote Ephesians. In that letter, he declared that there is ***“one baptism”*** (Eph. 4:5). Water baptism is a command of God (Acts 10:44-48) that is both essential to salvation (Mark 16:16; Eph. 5:25-26; etc.) and available until Jesus comes again (Matt. 28:18-20). Water baptism, performed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the ***“one baptism”*** commanded until Jesus returns. In the early days of the gospel, Holy Spirit baptism was an essential part of revealing and confirming God's word, but that work is complete. That leaves no room for Holy Spirit baptism today.

Since the apostles have been deceased almost 2,000 years, they are not available to lay hands on modern-day disciples to impart those gifts. With neither the direct (Holy Spirit baptism) nor indirect (laying on of hands by an apostle) means of acquiring miraculous gifts of the Spirit available, these powers are no longer given to people today. As Paul said, these gifts would cease and ***“be done away”*** (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

During the infancy of the church, God gave these gifts as the means of revealing and verifying His word. However, we possess that completed revelation in written form (Eph. 3:3-5; Jude 3; John 20:30-31; etc.). What a blessing!

Conclusion

Because God revealed His word by inspiration, we can have confidence in it, though it was written by fallible men. Truly, God revealed His word, ***“not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual word”*** (1 Cor. 2:13).

Let the Holy Spirit transform and indwell you through the inspired, verified word that He revealed (Eph. 3:3-5; 5:18,19; 6:10-18). God speaks! Listen to Him by reading and following His written word. — ***Truth Magazine***, July 2022. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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