

Caleb Evans (12)

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[0:00] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance! of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 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. All these are empowered by the one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So if I were to summarize the message of this morning's sermon, or the topic of this morning's sermon, I guess I would say that this is about how not to treat the gifts and activity of the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some topics that, if debated amongst Christians, can turn into a giant fight. One example of that, of which there are a few, is the subject of free destination. I've seen that one turn ugly fast. Now, I have my opinions on that topic, but experience has taught me to be pretty careful about how I talk about it. And so it is with spiritual gifts. That's another one that can be like navigating a minefield. Christians sometimes argue with one another, even over whether we're not going to be able to do it. But I don't know.

Have you ever seen that debate turn ugly? Yep, me too. I certainly have. Now, I happen to think that the gifts of the Spirit are still active for the simple reason that I don't see anything in the New Testament that suggests otherwise. But even if we're all agreed that the spiritual gifts are still active today, how they should be used is another question altogether. Because some of what we see in the church today, not talking about our congregation, but the broader church, some of what we see being done in the name of spiritual gifts is sometimes nothing short of demonic deception.

So here's a question for us today. How would we know? How do we know if the spiritual gifts were seen?

[2:49] How do we know what is being called the activity of the Holy Spirit is genuine or not? I'd point us here, verse 3 in our 1 Corinthians passage, where we read, Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all and everyone. Alright, we might say that seems simple enough. But if we were to expand on that, if what we think is the work of the Spirit, if it's what it claims to be, then Jesus Christ will be exalted.

The message of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will be made plain, and Jesus and no one else will be glorified. If it's really the Holy Spirit at work. The trouble is that sometimes what people claim is the operation of the Holy Spirit or the working out of spiritual gifts doesn't actually attest to the Lordship of Jesus and doesn't glorify Him.

Sometimes it's clear that the person being glorified is the person who claims to have the gifts. If I'm drawing attention to myself, if I am the one being glorified through what I'm calling the exercise of spiritual gifts, then it's probably not the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work.

[4:24] At best, it's my ego. Now, that's a big enough problem. But we can deal with things even bigger than big egos.

Recently, for example, I have been encountering an increasing number of people who hold to what is called the prosperity gospel. I'm guessing you have heard of it. Now, what's striking is that these folks talk as much about the Holy Spirit as anyone else I've ever talked to.

But they don't talk about the Holy Spirit in a way that is true and biblical. Now, it's hard to avoid this stuff because every other video you see on the internet and every other preacher you encounter on TV is pushing the prosperity gospel.

The preacher you see on TV who is asking for money for a new private jet is probably one of these types. It's everywhere, and it is a terrible lie. This movement and many other systems of false teaching ascribe to the Holy Spirit what the Holy Spirit does not do.

The Holy Spirit does not draw attention away from Christ in the message of the gospel. The focus of false teaching is not on that good old message of Christ and Him crucified.

[5:50] The focus, for example, of the prosperity gospel is on naming and claiming. I decide what I want. If I have enough faith, it comes to pass.

And that is the central message that these guys are pushing in the name of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't lead to the worship of Jesus. It leads to the worship of the idols that their hearers want more than they want Jesus.

In a system like this, God becomes a means to an end. What we ascribe to the Holy Spirit ends up being a system of trying to manipulate God to get what we want from Him.

The Spirit doesn't work that way. The Spirit leads us to worship at the foot of the cross. The Spirit leads us to value Christ above all else.

The Spirit exalts Jesus, never exalts the preacher, never exalts the person who has the spiritual gifts. And the Spirit does not exalt our worldly desires and idols.

[6:57] The Spirit glorifies Jesus. If our spiritual gifts are truly of the Spirit, they will glorify Jesus. They won't glorify me.

They won't glorify you. They will glorify Jesus Christ. And they certainly will not contradict God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. Now I want us to consider a couple more signs of what it looks like when the Spirit is actually active and the spiritual gifts are actually at work.

The next thing I want us to consider is that spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole body of Christ. We read, Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all and everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. God did not give me the gifts I need to be your rector so that I can show vote.

God didn't give you the spiritual gifts that you have so that you can lord it over other people. God gave each of us the gifts that we have so that we can help each other.

[8:14] I'm not some super spiritual class of Christian because I have the gift of preaching. You're not some super spiritual class of Christian because you have the gift of tongues. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Spiritual gifts are not justification for any of us to elevate our egos. It's not about us. Spiritual gifts are given so that we can minister to one another and glorify Jesus Christ.

I don't have gifts so that I can be important. You don't have gifts so that you can be important. We have them so that we can serve one another and glorify Jesus because Jesus is important.

But it's easy to forget that, isn't it? I mean, it's easy for us to end up wanting to draw attention to ourselves, to elevate ourselves instead of elevating Jesus.

that's human nature. And sometimes that happens in ways that can cause all kinds of problems.

[9:26] Here's an example of what I'm thinking of. You may have been at the receiving end of this at some point or maybe you've done it yourself. I don't know that any of you have but if you have, I'm sorry.

but I've seen people be hurt by this kind of thing. Someone comes up to you and they tell you, God told me to tell you X, Y, or Z.

Now, inevitably, that makes the person who told you that either look incredibly wise and spiritual or incredibly manipulative. It really raises the stakes too.

How do you respond to that? Well, if God told him to tell me, what do I do? I had better listen up.

And the thing is that God doesn't work through us manipulating people and I have seen people manipulated that way.

I have seen examples, and I don't think this is true in every case, but I have seen examples of there being an apparent agenda behind what God tells someone to tell another person.

[10:32] What I really find myself wondering is why God didn't just tell me instead of sending an email to someone else to forward to me and not even CCing me on it. Now, just because I have different gifts than you and vice versa, it does not mean that you're better than I am or I'm better than you are or that I'm always right and you really need to listen to me because, you know, I got it

from the source.

It doesn't mean that I'm super spiritual and you're not because the spirit gives gifts for our good and God's glory. We are given spiritual gifts according to what is needed and not according to our merit. Which brings me to my final point for this morning. We all have different gifts. gifts. If the spirit is the one who is giving those gifts, this should not surprise us.

This is an important point because I, for example, have family members who are part of a movement, part of a church, that teaches if you're really saved or if you're really filled with the Holy Spirit, you will naturally speak in tongues.

And that just isn't the case. I don't see any indication that everyone who is saved and everyone who is filled with the spirit will speak in tongues. I don't see that indicated in scripture.

[12:01] We are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and not by speaking in tongues or any other spiritual gift. We each have different spiritual gifts and that is a good thing.

We read in our passage, to one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one spirit, 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.

And then we read in verse 11, all these are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills. So why do you and I have some gifts and not others?

Because the spirit gave some gifts to you, gave some gifts to me, because the spirit decided it should be that way. It's not that you have gifts that I do not because you're more spiritual than me or vice versa.

It's not that I have gifts that you don't because I'm special and my gifts are better than your gifts. It's because the spirit in his sovereign wisdom gave some gifts to you, gave some gifts to the person in the pew next to you, gave some gifts to me so that souls would be saved, so that God's people would be built up, and most especially so that Jesus Christ would be glorified.

[13:38] One of the potential dangers in believing that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still at work in the world today, and I think that we should believe that, but we can find ourselves focused on the gifts themselves more than we're focused on the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts.

I think there have been times in my life when I have probably fallen into that mistake. Or we can get focused on the gifts that we think are awesome, the really super exciting gifts, to the exclusion of seeing the importance of others.

We can forget that even if there are many gifts, and there are, it is the same Holy Spirit who is at work. If we are viewing the gifts of the Spirit as ends unto themselves, well, we have missed the point.

As Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 13, if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing.

[14:48] If we don't have love for Jesus, if we don't have love for one another, if we don't have love for our neighbor, even if we're the best miracle workers the world has ever seen, we have completely missed the point.

And again, here's what I want us to take away this morning. The Spirit, in His sovereign wisdom, gave some gifts to you.

The Spirit gave some gifts to the person sitting next to you. The Spirit gave some gifts to me and to others, to each of us as He wills, so that souls would be saved, so that God's people would be built up, and especially that the name of Jesus Christ would be glorified.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.