

The Holy Spirit and Ministry

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 May 2010

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Let's pray.

Let's pray. Father, open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name, Amen. So you've heard the scripture.

It talks about these things called the gifts of the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues, prophecy, things like that. Thank you, Jim, for this one. And it's potentially a controversial passage.

And well, not only potentially, it is actually a controversial passage because people within the Christian community have very different opinions on what these gifts are about.

And whole denominations are formed around certain beliefs about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And I think folks in either camp look suspiciously at each other, thinking that the other person has possibly got it wrong.

[1 : 27] Because one side is all about the shundi-bundi, as we like to call it. And that's a bit of an in-joke for those of you who have a charismatic background.

And the other people think it's just a bit odd and weird. And so it's very divisive, which is incredibly ironic, considering the content of the passage before us when we have a really good crack in it.

See, Paul is writing to a church here that is in a real mess. It's the Corinthian church. And there's weird sexual stuff going on. And there's rivalries.

And there's personality cults. Some guys are saying, you know, I belong to Paul. And the people are saying, I belong to Apollos. And so it's not a great church situation. We're a little bit messed up.

And what really prompted this particular section of the letter in Paul's writing was this whole speaking in tongues thing.

[2 : 27] The Corinthian church had really grabbed a hold of it and had made it into a status symbol. Like if you could do this, Shandi Bandhi, you were extra spiritual.

You were part of the spiritual elite. You were better than other Christians. And of course, that's very anti-Christ, isn't it?

And as I was studying this, I began to think about what would be the gifts, what would be the status markers at St. John's?

What would be the things that, if you were good at this, you would be elevated? Wrongly. In our unhealthy, on our most sort of unhealthy days, what would be the things that we'd grab a hold of and go, man, if you can do that thing, if you're good at that spiritual thing, no, well, you're better than the rest of us.

And I guess it's probably like Bible teaching or something like that. You know, if you can do that, you're awesome. And you're much better than the person who sets the coffee out or prepares the communion.

[3 : 45] Now, which of course, that's nonsense, isn't it? And so let's do away with that kind of thinking right from the start. Let's not be that kind of family.

All right, so I've gotten to the application of the part of the sermon very early. So let's just take it back a little bit.

All right, so where are we? So the Corinthian church had singled out this thing speaking in tongues and had said, which is the supernatural ability to speak other languages? All right, and they created this hierarchy and they said, if you can do this, you're better than the other guys.

And Paul writes to sort them out. And he says two things. He says, let's be about Jesus and let's be about each other. Now, let's look at the verses one at a time because they're very, very good.

First one. Now, about spiritual gifts. Brothers. In other words, family. About the gifts.

[4 : 50] Family. The family that we're a part of. Where we should be caring for each other. About these things. I do not want you to be uninformed.

Other verses say, I do not want you to be ignorant. I love that. That's what I say to people who come and visit me in my office. So I'm so glad you came here. I do not want you to be stupid.

Stupid. I do not want you to be uninformed. I want you to get this. This is a really big thing. It's quite a harsh thing to say. I do not want you to miss this.

All right. This is really important. Verse two. You know that when you are pagans, somehow or other you are influenced and led astray by mute idols. You are once lost.

You are once worshipping pieces of stone, just things, carved animals. And they are mute, aren't they? They are mute. And they put that word mute in there because it is trying to describe the voicelessness of the thing that they used to pray to.

[5 : 59] The nothingness of this thing. This thing which can give you no guidance, can't help you. You used to pray to this thing. You used to worship this thing.

But now you have Jesus. And listen to the way Paul says that they have Jesus. He says this in verse three. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus be cursed.

And no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. It is kind of odd phrasing, I know.

It is a little bit confusing. But basically it is saying that the only way you can say Jesus is Lord is if the Holy Spirit is in you. You need a revelation from God.

You need God to come into your life and empower you to say that. And see the Corinthian church was, and this is a really key line here.

[6 : 57] Because the Corinthian church was trying to establish some other measure of spirituality. And what they were trying to do is go, okay, you can tell if you've got the Holy Spirit in your life because you're about to speak in tongues.

And Paul's saying, no. You're about to tell if you've got the Holy Spirit in your life if you can say Jesus is Lord. And you can say that honestly and you can mean that.

That's the test of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Let me put it another way. This is the way that John Stott has put it and Jim has alluded to several times already in the service.

The career of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus known. The career of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus known.

It's to glorify Jesus. To show people how cool Jesus is. And it's really important that the Corinthian church heard that. That the Holy Spirit is about making Jesus known.

[8 : 00] Because these guys were trying to make themselves known. With these extra special Shandi Bundy gifts that they had discovered. You know, look at me.

I can do freaky spiritual things. I can do these amazing miraculous things. I'm really awesome. And Paul is saying, no, guys. I don't want you to be ignorant here. I really want you to get this.

These gifts and stuff, these are all about Jesus. These are all about making Him known. The job of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus. And then Corinthians had got it horribly wrong.

Now, I'm very conscious that as I use this phrase, gifts of the Holy Spirit. There's probably some of you here who have no idea what I'm talking about. So, what I want to do is I want to jump from verse 3 all the way down to verse 8.

And the rest of it. And just look at that last little list there. Because there's this list of gifts. You know, it sort of says, to another faith by the same Spirit.

[9 : 01] To another gift of healing by one Spirit. To another works of miracles. There's this kind of like list, right? So, we could look at that.

And we could go, okay. So, these are special enablings that the Spirit gives. And this is all of them. And there aren't any others.

And they're really about helping me be a good Christian. It's not quite, you haven't quite got it, if that's the way you're reading it. The gifts, they are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

They are the Holy Spirit enabling you to do things. And this list mentions nine. And some appear to be quite supernatural in this list.

And kind of quite interesting. But there aren't just nine. This is just like a list that they chose of a lot of gifts that the Holy Spirit can give us.

[10 : 03] A lot of enablings the Spirit of God can give us. If you look through the New Testament, there are about five different lists of gifts of the Holy Spirit. And they're all different.

Like the one in Romans sort of includes some of these things. But it adds things like being a good encourager. Being good at administration. So, this is not an exhaustive list.

He's trying to say the Spirit enables you to make Christ known and to serve each other. Here's some ways. Here's some of them. And do you notice we're on that list?

Paul puts the gift of speaking in tongues. He puts it last. So, he's really nailing this point home for the Corinthian church. The thing that you think is just so awesome that you think this is the real test.

He puts it right at the end. Okay, let's get back into the guts of this passage here. Verses 4 to 7.

[11 : 05] Now, there are varieties of gifts with the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service with the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities with the same God who empowers them all and everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 4 to 1 is given through the Spirit. And then the list. Now, for centuries, recent centuries, it was assumed that only certain people in the church actually had any gifts at all.

The Holy Spirit worked through only a very few people. Just a couple of people. And that was the clergy. The people who got paid.

The people who stood up the front and did the liturgy and did the preaching. It was assumed that they were the only ones that had any gifts. And everyone else just sort of watched. Now, fortunately, we're through that era. Because that's absolutely wrong.

I mean, that's totally wrong. Because this clearly says that we all have something to offer and contribute to the family of God.

[12 : 13] To each one. To each one. To each one. Manifestations of the Spirit. To each one. To each one. To each one. To all of us. So what does that mean for this family?

This church family? Well, it means several very important things. It means that there is no room for jealousy. And I think this is one of the unspoken problems in churches.

Is jealousy. You know, I wish I could do that. If I was more like that person. If I had that gifting. If I was that confident up front. You know, that would be awesome.

I wish I could be more like that. But I'm not. But. These passages. I just read. These four here.

I mean, or these three here. They celebrate the unity of the source. These are. These two things that holds up. Unity and diversity. It celebrates the unity. You know, where they all come from.

[13:13] It says the same Spirit. Same Lord. Same God. But then it goes on. To talk about the diversity in the family. There are different gifts.

Different service. Different working. God wants diversity. God wants us to be different. Be a bit useless if we were all Bible teachers.

Who would. Who would do the coffee. You know. Who would set up the. Communion. Stuff. Who would greet at the door.

Who would make this place look nice. Who would pay my wage. You know. Like. Who would. Who would. Who would do that stuff. There.

When you look at the list. And you look at all the list. There does appear to be. Some of them are quite supernatural. And some of them are. Seem to be more ordinary. And there are distinctions.

[14:17] In the sense that. Some of them are kind of like word things. And some of them more kind of activity. Kind of things. But ultimately. There's no theological difference between them. Even though they differ.

In activity. In form of stuff. There's no theological difference. They are all. They are all from God. From the spirit. And they're all for others.

Serve our friends. And our family in the church. And to make Christ known. There's no room for jealousy. And there's no room for this. I've got nothing to offer.

You know. There's no room for. I've got nothing to do. I can't. I can't offer anything. You make God a liar. When you say that. And there's no room for saying.

I'm really awesome. Because I do this. There's no room for that. There's no room for jealousy. There's no room for grandstanding. There's no room for saying. I've got nothing to offer this family. And there's certainly no. Reason to stay on the sidelines.

[15:14] Of the church family. Because this passage does call us to action. Verse 7. To each. Is given. The manifestation of the spirit. For the common. Good.

You're given gifts. To use. For the good of the family. The church is not a cruise ship.

Where we have 10% of us. Doing most of the work. And 90% of us. Just get to enjoy it. It's more like a battleship. You know.

We all have something to do. We all have something to contribute. Many of the people that do really great work in this church. Have no title. Have no.

Don't get paid. And most of you probably don't know who they are. You know. They're the. Like the sanctuary guild is a great example actually. You never see them. I don't know. I've never caught a member of the sanctuary guild.

[16:10] I don't know who they are. I just. Sometimes I think I might hide in church one day. And try and catch me. Catch me a sanctuary guild member. I don't know who they are. But. Communion. You know. Communion Sundays. It's all set out.

Looks beautiful. You know. There are lots of people in the church that visit people in the hospitals. There are people who come and clean for us.

Who come and cook for us. When I became a Christian. When I was 17 years old. I was a very small. I started attending a very small church of about 30 people.

And. We didn't have a building. We just met in a church. In a school hall. And all the chairs. Were kept in this little dungeon area. And me and my friend. Who became a Christian at the same time as me.

Would get to church about an hour early. To set up. To set up the chairs. And make the place look nice. And. I did that for like two years. And I was just really.

[17 : 10] Happy to be involved. To be honest. You know. I was just happy to. Help. To be. That was the way that I could. Help. So I became a Christian.

And the Holy Spirit came into my life. And changed my heart. And said. Here's. You can do this. This is easy. I really enjoyed it. It was great. And I think it came as a result.

Because I. When I first became a Christian. I didn't even know what to pray. And. And so I would always just pray. God use me. You know. God use me. God use me.

I didn't. You know. I didn't even know what I was really asking. I just would say. God use me. God use me. And God chose to use me. To do chairs. In the church.

For a couple of years. And that was. That was great. I really enjoyed it. A friend of mine. His name is Tim. He's a really good friend of mine. He's a pediatric oncologist.

[18 : 04] He's probably the smartest man that I know. He's from New Zealand. He's just moved here from Vancouver. And in New Zealand. In the pediatric. World of pediatric oncology. He's a total. He's an absolute legend.

Like he's a famous guy. He's moved here. And he's. Now he's big name over here. In pediatric oncology. So he's studying. He's attending this church. Downtown. He really really enjoys it.

And. He went to the. Minister. A couple of weeks back. And he goes. I just want to help. What can I do? And he didn't go. I just want to help. I'm a pediatric oncologist.

Perhaps I could. You know. Do some. Oncology work here. I mean. You know what I mean. Like. I'm a very important man. Is there any middle management positions?

I could. You know. Is there a fast track. To the board of trustees? No. He went. And he just said. I want to. I want to serve the family.

[19 : 04] I want to be part of the family. I want to serve the family. I want to serve the family. What is the job. That you have the most trouble. Finding people to do. And.

And they said. We. It's so hard to find people. Who will do security for us. Who will take care of the car park. And watch that. And. And. Walk the money out the back. And all that kind of stuff.

He goes. Well. You know. I'd have to help sign up. I'll do that every five weeks. You know. So that's what he does. I found out his boss. Who's a very important man.

In the medical field. In Vancouver. Teachers Sunday school. Here at St. John's. There are wonderful people. Who have just. Given their hearts to Christ. And have said.

Holy Spirit. How can I serve the family. And God is using them. Very powerfully. In very ordinary ways.

[20 : 02] When we. When we read about salvation. And I'm finishing here. When we read about salvation. In the Old and the New Testament. There seems to be this thread. That comes through. And it's. And it's.

And it's. And it's not what I initially thought. Christianity was about. It's. It's not. That we are saved. Individually. To have these. Individual relationships. With God. And the church is there.

To facilitate that relationship. But rather. That. The promise of salvation. Is about God. Creating a people.

A family. You know the scripture. I will be your God. You will be my people. And I will dwell. In your midst. My people. And I think.

That's what this passage is about. Is that Christ ascended. This is Ascension Sunday. Christ ascended. The Holy Spirit came.

[21 : 07] The Holy Spirit is in our hearts. If we're a Christian. And he's wanting us. To become his people. And so he's gifting us. In different ways.

There is no exhaustive list. He's gifting us. In different ways. To serve each other. And glorify him. So when we read this passage.

The wrong question to ask. Is what is speaking in tongues. Or what is a word of wisdom. It doesn't say. What those things are. The wrong question. That's the wrong question to ask.

The right question is. Holy Spirit. Put in my heart. And gift me. So that I can serve the church. So that I can serve this family.

Amen. Colin. Would you come and pray for us? Yeah.

[22 : 14] We're going to pray now. So. Sit or kneel. Get in a posture of prayer. There will be breaks. In the prayer time. And I will say. Lord in your mercy.

And if you could join. In response to me. By saying. Hear our prayer. Our Father in heaven. We are able to come.

Before you tonight. Not because. Of anything we've done. We're only able to come before you. Because you love us enough. To sacrifice your son.

For us. Lord. We thank you for loving us. Jesus. We thank you. For laying down your life for us. And taking the punishment. We deserve. Lord.

In your mercy. You are. Amen. Gracious God. Sustain our leaders. We lift up to you. David. Dan. And Jim. As well as.

[23 : 10] As all the other people. Who do. Who do things in this church. That. That go unnamed. Father. Thank you. Thank you for them. And their service. And their leadership.

We ask them. We ask that you fill them. With your spirit. And provide for them. Lord. In your mercy. Lord. We pray for the youths.

All in. Retreat next weekend. Bless Aaron. As he prepares to speak. Bless the weekend. With fellowship. And fun. And safety. But most of all.

Make it a time. Of learning. And growth. In you. For the youth. Of our church. Father. Lord. In your mercy. Lord. We pray for.

For your church. Lord. We are weak. And foolish. But you are strong. And wise. Lord. We thank you. That you work. Through your church. And we praise you.

[24 : 05] For the work. That you do. Through broken people. Lord. We. We thank you. That we're merely. Instruments. That we're merely.

Your instruments. Would you make people. Would you make people. Look at you. And see how glorious you are. Lord. In your mercy. Lord.

We pray for this world. That you have made. You made it perfect. But we're sinful. And we've corrupted this world. Into one filled with pain. And suffering. Lord.

We ask that you bring healing. And peace to our fallen world. We lift up specifically. Right now. Haiti. And Chile. And the Middle East. Lord.

We pray that you. Just bless these places. And heal them. And provide for the people there. Lord.

[25 : 05] We eagerly await the day. That you return. And restore this world. To the way that you intended. Lord. In your mercy. Now join with me.

And pray the prayer. That Christ taught us. Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth.

As it is in heaven. Give us today. Our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those. Who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom. And the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.