

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 30 of 32

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT III

HOW TO HAVE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT ACTIVE IN THE CHURCH

1. We must sincerely desire to have the spiritual gifts manifested among us, and then expect them to operate: *"But covet earnestly the best gifts . . ."* (I Corinthians 12:31). *"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts"* (I Corinthians 14:1).

2. We must have the right motive or reason for wanting the gifts active in our church. That is the reason sandwiched in between the two chapters that deal with the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12 and 14), we find the "love" chapter (I Corinthians 13).

Take notice that after Paul said, *". . . covet earnestly the best gifts,"* he ended the statement by saying, *"and yet show I unto you a more excellent way,"* and then he began to talk about the importance of agape love. The gifts of the Spirit must be operated out of a heart of love for others. Then they will not be misused.

The gifts of the Spirit are never for self-glorification. They are for the edification of the body of Christ: *"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth (builds up) himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth (builds up) the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying"* (I Corinthians 14:3-5).

"Let all things be done unto edifying" (I Corinthians 14:26).

3. We must have the moving of the Holy Spirit in our churches, which comes only by much prayer and fasting: *"As they ministered to the Lord (worshipped the Lord), and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"* (Acts 13:2).

In the middle of their fasting and worship, the gifts of the Spirit operated to give direction to the church. They were told to send forth Paul and Barnabas as the very first missionaries.

In the early days of the church of Jesus Christ, there were continual manifestations of God's glory and power, and the operating of the gifts of the Spirit. It happened because they sought God for it. The church of Jesus Christ was under attack. They were forbidden by the religious leaders of Jerusalem to teach further in the name of Jesus. What was their answer to this? Did they stage a sit-down strike or a hunger strike? That is what some people would have done in the age we live in, but the church reacted by having a prayer meeting: *"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus"* (Acts 4:29-30).

What was the result of their prayer meeting? *"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all"* (verses 31, 33).

JESUS CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE IN ALL THINGS

It is the will of God for us to be conformed to the image of the man Christ Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). Setting the example for us, He was both water and Spirit baptized (Matthew 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit dwelt in Him since His conception, but, as our example, he was baptized, and there were outward signs of His being full of the Holy Ghost. It is the will of God for us to live like Him, and even be willing to suffer as He did (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21-24).

We have seen that it is also the will of God for us to have a ministry like His (John 14:12). Jesus did not begin His ministry immediately. He needed a special anointing for that: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"* (Isaiah 61:1).

This was a prophecy of Jesus Christ. That same anointing that would enable Him to effectively preach would also enable him to minister the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus began His ministry, He spent forty days in the wilderness, fasting and praying, and conquering the devil (Luke 4:1-13). At the end of that time, the Bible says of Him: *"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about"* (verse 14).

At that point of His life He began a miraculous ministry. It is important for us to realize that Jesus Christ continued to spend much time in prayer--and thereby kept that special anointing upon His life.

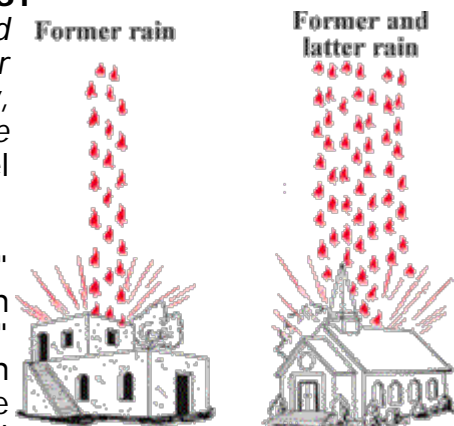
1. Jesus rose up a great while before day and prayed (Mark 1:35).
2. Jesus continued all night in prayer to God before He chose the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12).
3. Jesus prayed often in Gethsemane. When He faced the great struggle of His life, He prayed until His sweat was as great drops of blood (Luke 22:39-44).

"(Jesus) . . . in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7).

THE LAST DAY OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Through the prophet Joel, God had promised: *"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month"* (Joel 2:23).

Many Bible scholars agree that the "former rain" represents the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which began on the day of Pentecost, and the "latter rain" represents the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which began at the turn of the century. In actuality, the former rain and latter rain were separated by a period of five months. But God has promised that in the last days, the "former rain," and the "latter rain" would be poured out together. In other words, the greatest outpouring of God's Spirit would take place in the last days.



This is further confirmed a few verses later: *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh"* (verse 28). This outpouring of the Holy Ghost was not to happen by accident or coincidence, but as a result of God's people obeying what they were asked to do in the first two chapters of the book of Joel: We must humble ourselves: *"Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God . . . Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD"* (Joel 1:13-14).

We must turn to God with all of our heart: *"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God . . . And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh . . ."* (Joel 2:12-13, 28).

Many people take note of the tremendous evil in the land today, and say that it is hopeless to have a great move of God in such an evil world. But God had already spoken of these days through His prophet Isaiah: *"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"* (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Is this not the day that sin covers the earth like thick, gross darkness? Then these are the days we need to arise, and shine, and be filled with the glory of God. These are the exciting days when God is already pouring out His Spirit in a measure never experienced before by mankind. As we humble ourselves, and fast and pray with proper motives, God will give us that special anointing that we need to have the gifts of the Spirit operating in our lives. As we "desire the best gifts," He will show us which of the gifts He desires to operate in our lives, and help us to develop them for the glory of His kingdom! Even so, Jesus, let it happen to all of us! *ds*

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