

The Holy Spirit's Work

The Holy Spirit's Work, Part 2: A Handout

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Overview: By better discerning the world's teaching and biblical resources like the Book of Acts, we can better understand how to discern, interpret, and use our spiritual gifts and experiences.

Introduction

- Remember how Jesus promised love, healing, and joy coming from His Spirit. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:38). God works wonders in His people through His Spirit.
 - Let's review the Holy Spirit's three major purposes to ascertain what that wonder looks like:
 - Commune with God
 - Live a holy life
 - Serve God and others
 - Shared mind
 - Shared heart
 - Shared labor
- Example #1: "Seek the Spirit" (What does it mean or imply that we are to seek the Spirit through some means?)
 - Example #2: Division in the church (Are God's plans more important than relationships?)

Summary: We can only properly handle the difficult points when we keep them within the larger context.

☒ Two Kinds of Believers (Eph 4:14-13)

1. The Children (Eph 4:14)

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14).

- Although all believers go through the child's stage where they are less able to discern false teaching, they need to deliberately move beyond this stage where they are easily deceived.
- Evil one destabilizes; Confuses; Directs into false teaching; Becomes permanent state

2. The Mature (Eph 4:13)

"Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

- "Until we all" remind us of God's lofty goals for believers. The Bible's teaching forms the basis for the unity of the faith. As we all grow as mature believers, the fullness of Christ indwells us.
- The Spirit leads to "unity of the faith" (not false teachings); Develops "mature man"; "Fullness of Christ"; Ongoing status "until we all"

As Children

Unstable
Temporary
Believe what they hear
Easily tricked
Target of scheming

As Mature

Stable
Ongoing
Doctrinally stable
Like Christ
United with others

Let's look at several points of confusion on the Holy Spirit.

☒ Secular Mindset - Worldly presumptions infect the church

Modern education and philosophy have captured today's minds. They no longer believe in the spirit world, and if they don't believe in the spirit world, they don't believe in God, miracles, the Scriptures, or the Holy Spirit.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants... ³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Rev 1:1,3).

"(I) was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses" (2 Cor 12:4-5).

It's hard to deny unique spiritual experiences in the Bible. What should we expect in our age?

Application: How has your life and faith been affected by secular worldly thinking? Does prayer work?

✘ The Age of Miracles? The Validity of Supernatural Experiences in the Church

The church is divided over the possibility of miracles along with the revelational set of gifts. Are miracles, prophets and revelational gifts for today? If so, why don't we see them? Is my church unspiritual?

1. The cessationists believe all the gifts were given only for the early apostolic age to provide extra authority and signs for the apostles to confirm the Gospel. The "perfect" has come (1 Cor 13:10).
2. The continuationists, however, assert that the Bible does not claim that certain gifts are not operational today (or for the last 1,700 years).

Cessationism	vs	Continuationism
Miracles, prophecy and tongues has ceased		Miracles, prophecy and tongues continues on
Such gifts only establish apostle's authority		The gifts have several purposes (common good)
Don't see gifts after the apostles' time		Those other than apostles had such gifts
Foundation laid makes gifts irrelevant		Christ's fullness is distributed through gifts

Each side insists it's teaching the Bible and promoting spiritual life. Notice how 1 Cor 12:7 says the spiritual gifts are a "manifestation of the Spirit" and that it is for the common good. Both sides assert that they protect the Gospel, but are they right? Counterarguments:

- **Two sides unequal.** Paul generally praises the gifts of the Corinthians (1:4-7) putting the burden of proof on cessationists whose arguments are unconvincing, "so that you are not lacking in any gift" (7). "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances" (1 Thes 5:19-20).
- **Greater purpose:** These gifts not only affirm the authority of the apostles (Eph 2:20) as cessationists say but also bring about "the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).
- **Others possess:** Stephen, not an apostle, but: "full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8) who along with other historical cases (John Knox) testify that miracles and revelatory gifts are not only associated with the apostles' age.
- **Treated as typical:** Paul intertwines the revelatory/miraculous gifts with other gifts accepted by all in 1 Cor 12:27-30.

Conclusion: Cessationists need to be more accountable to the Scriptures. However, we still must work together to accomplish God's greater purposes. Any arrogance or spirit of superiority proves the Spirit is not with us. We work for "the common good" and believe all of us are needed to accomplish God's greater purpose.

Application: Can we defend our positions with God's Word? Or even if we are right, do we not need our brothers and sisters who approach things a bit differently? How do we think about others that differ from us?

✘ An Outline of the Book of Acts: Understanding the Spirit's Works

Although the Book of Acts has confused many believers, it actually provides a framework to understand God's advances in our work along with our spiritual experiences. While we cannot, without caution, say Acts depicts what is normal for the church, the significant transition points, highlighted by Luke, helps us understand the Holy Spirit's purposes in our lives and churches.

- Jesus was greatly filled with the Spirit and His gifts but speaking in other languages is not at all seen.
- Acts: Many Christians assert this need because of a casual look at three incidents in the Book of Acts.

For example, Christians often point to the Book of Acts to substantiate the claim that all believers need to be baptized and filled with the Spirit. So, while presenting this on Acts, I am also attempting to answer the questions of baptism of the Spirit, speaking of tongues, signs, casting out devils, etc., that often arise with the mention of filling of the Spirit.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (1:8).

• Acts 2:3-4 Jerusalem (Pentecost)

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance...." (Ac 2:3-4).

- **Acts 10:46 Judea and Samaria (Caesarea)**

“For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God” (Ac 10:46).

- **Acts 19:6 Uttermost Parts (Ephesus)**

“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying” (Ac 19:6).

Luke uses the speaking of languages, outward affirmation for the filling of the Holy Spirit, to verify the Holy Spirit’s work in each new cross-cultural group. In essence, the Holy Spirit, repeats what He just did with Jewish believers in Jerusalem in Acts 2, affirming that God came to similarly fill His people as Joel stated at the birth of the church (New Covenant), “‘It shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind” (Ac 2:17). The Lord has affirmed His purposes of crossing cultures to a new group of people (Acts 2:3-4, 10:46, 19:6) as He directed He would do in the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20).

Is speaking in tongues the proof or needed evidence for being filled with the Spirit?

- We confirm the immediate speaking of foreign languages provided clear outward evidence of the Spirit’s inner filling (Ac 10:46; 11:15-16).
- But all 3 incidents strategically follow Acts’ outline of breaking through the initial resistance of the Spirit’s indwelling in groups of people at the birth of the church (1-7; 8-10; 11-28).
- Affirms that God came to similarly fill His people as Joel stated at the birth of the church (New Covenant), “‘It shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind” (Ac 2:17).
- Incidental rather than typical because many places ‘filled with Spirit’ is not associated with languages but other results: joy, exalting, prophesying, boldness in witnessing, etc., “And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Ac 13:52; 9:17; Eph 5:17-21).

Important Purposes of these Transitions

- One God, same work
- Inclusive (Jew/Gentile)
- One church and leadership
- No one is inferior
- Unity of church regularly taught in NT (Eph 3; Rom 1:16; Rev 5:9-10).

A person’s filling of the Holy Spirit will bear outward results but need not include the speaking of languages to prove they have the Spirit of God. That was for special circumstances to replicate proof of equality with the Jews in Acts 2. The Lord wanted to assure all that there was one Savior for all mankind, and that there is only one church.

Important Reminder

Why should the church refrain from insisting believers must speak in tongues to prove he/she has the Holy Spirit?

- For anyone to make a claim that a spiritual gift is demanded to be displayed by all believers is a sham. There is clear teaching that there are varying spiritual gifts for different members of the body. Paul rebukes the notion that we all have the same spiritual gift! What would we be like if we were all noses or tongues?

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor 12:4-7)

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” (1 Cor 12:18-21)

29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (1 Cor 12:29-30)

Conclusion: The progressive outline of Acts helps resolve some questions surrounding Holy Spirit experiences like speaking in tongues, miracles, etc.

• **A. Gospel in Jerusalem: Origin (1:12-7)**

• **B. Gospel in Samaria and Judea: Transition (8-10)**

• **C. Gospel in the Uttermost Parts: Expansion (11-28)**

Summary

- Because the Holy Spirit lives in each believer, he/she will also have certain gifts that the Lord imparts.
- Each Christian is uniquely important and valuable.
- No spiritual gift (position, characteristic) is to be identified with spiritual maturity.
- There is nowhere in Scripture that tells us that the Holy Spirit or His gifts are now being held back. However, we recognize that many believers childishly use their spiritual gifts.

Discussion Questions on the Works of the Holy Spirit

1. What is the Holy Spirit doing among our churches today?
2. Is it fair or right to focus on the Spirit's work by certain signs like speaking in tongues, miracles? Why or why not?
3. How does God sometimes use you to display Christ's love and care to others?
4. What is the most important purpose for Act's transitional signs?
5. What are two reasons it is wrong to insist all believers speak in tongues?