

Gifts of the Spirit

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

The unique factor in the Christian Gospel is not only Jesus but the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that's what we've been saying over the past few days, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is what sets Christianity apart from Mohammedanism and Buddhism and other religions. It is that peculiar gift that was offered, you remember, by Peter on the day of Pentecost when he said, "And you shall receive the Holy Spirit when you're baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Then, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

And that is the unique gift that brings to us the very abilities and aptitudes of Jesus himself. No other religion can do that. Buddha can never ensure that all his followers have the very gifts that he had. Mohammad can never ensure that all his followers have the gifts that he had. But, Jesus can ensure that we experience his own life through this gift of the Holy Spirit. And you remember we shared in the past how the Holy Spirit normally comes into a person when he is born of the Spirit, when he receives Jesus the first time for the forgiveness of his sins.

And how often the Holy Spirit then begins to try to expand his influence throughout that person's life and begins to try to fill that person with himself and how very soon after that most of us began to experience a real double life inside us, a real sense of hypocrisy where the desires of the flesh, the desires of our own selfish independent attitude to God strove against the desires of the Spirit and we found that we were prevented from doing what we would. And most of us have found that our lives have followed that kind of pattern.

We saw how in the New Testament it didn't need to be like that. How in the New Testament probably people were born of the Spirit and filled with the Spirit all at once and they died to self and were raised with Christ the first day virtually that they heard the gospel. But we saw how even in the New Testament many people experienced only half of the work of the Holy Spirit.

You remember the people who were converted in Acts 19 by Apollos had obviously believed in the one that was to come and they'd obviously entered into some forgiveness of sins into actually a Jewish experience of God wiping out their sins. Now, many of us have entered into that kind of partial experience. Many of us have entered into what the people entered into who were converted by Philip who entered into a real baptism into Jesus' name for the forgiveness of sins and presumably came alive in the Spirit and had the Spirit of Jesus inside them and were born of the Spirit but had not really been filled with the Holy Spirit and so the apostles had to come down and pray they would receive the Holy Spirit.

I think many of us too have come into the partial experience of the Corinthians who experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the gifts of the Spirit but still walked in strife, and envy, anger, and jealousy and therefore behaved like ordinary men and were called carnal or fleshly Christians. And so we saw that in the New Testament times there were many people who entered into only half of the work of the Holy Spirit so many of us have found the same thing, we've had to come to a new experience of conviction of sin, of seeing where the Holy Spirit was not filling us completely and seeing where we needed to die to self with Christ and be filled and cleansed by his Holy Spirit.

Now brothers that's only half of the work of the Holy Spirit. The purifying work is only half of the work that the Holy Spirit was sent to do. It is the cleansing work by which the Holy Spirit is

able to bring about inside our own lives the nine fruit of the Spirit but it is God's will that we should not only walk with the purity of Jesus but with the power of Jesus. And so the second part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to anoint us with himself with power so that we can begin to administer the gifts of the Spirit.

Now, if you imagine us entering into the purity of the Holy Spirit without the power of the Holy Spirit, then it's like imagining Jesus walking in absolute purity and coming to the leper and being able to do nothing with him. Saying, "Well, look I love you with a pure heart but I can't do anything about your leprosy." In other words, you would see a maimed Christ, a crippled Christ and if we walk only in the purity of the Holy Spirit, we may walk in holiness, we may walk in purity and in joy in our own lives, but we walk as a crippled Christ as far as the troubles and the problems of this world is concerned.

Moreover, we'll probably eventually walk back into our own self confidence because we'll depend on our own psychology or our philosophy to deal in problems of counseling with people who are being oppressed by Satan. We'll try to deal with the ordinary form of medicine with people who are oppressed in their body. So, it's vital not to accept only half of the work of the Holy Spirit but to go on and see that the Holy Spirit wants to make available to us the nine gifts of the Spirit. And this is the second part of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, on the other hand, if you enter into the nine gifts of the Spirits without the purity of the Holy Spirit running through you, if you enter into a ministry of gifts without really being purified and cleansed from anger, and envy, and jealousy, then you'll find yourself ministering the gifts in the power of the flesh or in the power of satanic forces and you'll find your ministering gifts but instead of ministering life of Jesus through the gifts you're ministering miracles and great events that everybody is preoccupied with and people will be preoccupied with you instead of with Jesus.

So it's vital, you can see, to enter into both the purity and the power of the Holy Spirit. What I'd like to do just for a short time now is to talk a little about the nine gifts of the Spirit. So, if you have a Bible maybe you'd turn to 1 Corinthians 12 and just see the teaching that is very plain there and that will prevent us from going astray in regards to the nine gifts of the Spirit if we'd only look at it. I think the first thing really to see is the statement made in 1 Corinthians 12:11, "All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

Now brothers, we need to write that on all our walls and in all our hearts, that it's the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. You can't claim the gifts yourself by the sheer determination of your faith. It is the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. He distributes to each one individually as he wills for the up building of the body of Christ. Now, you cannot go to God and say, "I want a gift to prove that I'm filled with the Holy Spirit." Nor can you go to God and say, "Look, I need this gift now give it to me." The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts to each one of us as he wills.

Now, I agree with you that the Bible says that we should covet the best gifts. We should want them, you see. We should desire them. We should be in a position where we say, "Holy Spirit, we want you to give us all the power that we need to be you to these people today." And that should be our general attitude of hunger and thirst for all that the Holy Spirit wants to give us. But then we should wait upon him to show us which gift he wants us to have so that we can believe him for it.

So brothers, it's important to see that it's the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts. You don't grab the gifts yourself. That is why it's important to see the truth that is outlined there in Verse 29 of 1 Corinthians 12, a verse we looked at before, 1 Corinthians 12:29, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" In other words, God is plainly saying, "All people are not prophets, all do not work miracles." Why? Because they haven't enough faith, because they're not baptized with the Holy Spirit, because they've been under heretical teaching that has taught that the Holy Spirit only cleanses? No, because the Holy Spirit distributes to each one individually as he wills and he does not distribute tongues to everybody and he does not distribute gifts of miracles to everyone. He distributes to each one as he wills.

One of the beauties of this is that no man becomes preeminent above everybody else by the fact that he ministers in the whole nine gifts of the Spirit. No man becomes preeminent. It's vital for John to be in the body because the Holy Spirit is given him a gift that he has not given me. It is vital for Scott to be in the body because the Holy Spirit is distributing to him a gift that he has not distributed to me and so the body comes into a beautiful harmony and wholeness where it's not just a matter of Scott saying, "Oh yeah, yeah, I know I'm part of the body. I know you want me to feel I'm necessary but really you could do it on your own." It's so good to be free from that. To see that each of us is vital to the body. That the body is not a body if John is not in it. The body is not a body if Scott is not in it. Why? Because the Holy Spirit will distribute to him a particular gift at a particular time that will be needed in the body.

I think that's important to see that, that no man can say, "I have the gift of healing." No man can say, "I have the gift of miracles." Every one of us has to say, "The Holy Spirit will give us the gift for the time that we need it at the time that we need it and then will take it back to himself." So, I think it's good to see that the Holy Spirit is the one who distributes the gifts.

Maybe it would help us to see that there are differences of gifts, and differences of workings, and differences of services because I think a lot of people say, "If you're not ministering the gift of tongues, or the gift of healing in the way I have seen it ministered then you're not ministering that gift." Now maybe you'd look in Verse 4 of 1 Corinthians 12 to see God's description of how the gifts work, "And there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit." So, there are nine different gifts but there is the one Holy Spirit who distributes those gifts.

Then come to another person's attrinity, the second person in Verse 5, "And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord." Now, there are varieties of service, Jesus will appoint some of us to be pastors and teachers, some of us to be evangelists, some of us probably to be administrators. He'll appoint different ones of us to different services and the nine gifts will be ministered in those different services, all obviously in different ways. A preacher ministers the gift of prophecy in a very obvious way that is plain to everybody. He ministers it in a very different way when he's in a counseling situation. He ministers it in a slightly different way when he's an evangelist. Now, there are varieties of service and some of us will be administrators but we'll still need the nine gifts of the Spirit for our service.

Then in Verse 6, "And there are varieties of working," maybe this is the most important one, "But it is the same God who inspires them all in every one." Now, there are different gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit. There are different services appointed by Jesus but there are varieties of working of the gifts or differences of operation and they are determined by God. And brothers I think it's vital for us to see that everybody does not minister the gift of healing the way Katherine Kuhlman

does. She ministers it by listening to Jesus' Spirit and knowing when he reveals to her that somebody in the balcony has been healed. Then she says, "Come up if you've been healed and she invites them up." They're already healed she doesn't heal them via her touching them.

So often as she recognizes and is given the gift of revelation, they have been healed. Oral Roberts is different, he calls them up, lays his hands on them and heals them in the name of Jesus. There's a man called Christopher Woodard in London who doesn't heal either of those ways. He is given discernment by Spirit to see when a person is tense or upset in their own spiritual life and he ministers directly to that and the healing of their whole spirit spreads to their body and heals them.

Now brothers, it's vital to see that there are different ways to minister the gift of healing and we are being utterly naïve and utterly unfair to God's word to say a man has not a gift of healing because he simply doesn't lay hands on people and they're healed. Healing comes in many different ways, so the gift of prophecy, so the gift of knowledge. So, dear brother David can stand in front of a meeting and say, "I know what you were doing wrong today and I know what your relationship is with this person," and he can see right into your spirit and he can tell you that and that's a real gift of knowledge for knowing what is in a person's life. Now, he can minister that gift of knowledge that way another person can minister it in a study counseling another person not saying, "Scott, I know what is in your heart." Maybe he doesn't know, but he shares something automatically and Scott wonders, "How on earth did you know that about me?" And that's the gift of knowledge ministered in a much less obtrusive way but ministered nevertheless. So it's important to see, you see, that there are different ways of workings in the gifts.

Now, brothers maybe we could go on directly into the gifts themselves and just talk about them one-by-one a little. You see that there are nine gifts. Let's look at really the first one mentioned there in Verse 8, "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom." Now, there is an earthly wisdom you know, that comes from studying the psychology books, the philosophy books and even that comes from studying the Bible. But there is a spiritual wisdom that is exactly right for that person in their spiritual state. There's a spiritual wisdom that is deeper than just a scriptural wisdom. There's a time when it may seem to you, "The right thing scripturally is this person is obviously in disobedience to God and what they need to do is repent." And you say, "Okay, you must repent," and you minister repentance to them.

A spiritual wisdom gives you the insight to see that what that person fails to believe is that God is good and that God will forgive them and that's really why they don't repent. They don't want to even acknowledge their sins because they're afraid God won't forgive them. Now spiritual wisdom is concerned with the internal workings of the Holy Spirit in a person and is a wisdom that is deeper than just knowledge. Spiritual wisdom is really what a lot of the churches lacked. Spiritual wisdom for instance in ministers or speakers enables you to apply the right word to a body at the right time.

I remember reading once where someone said a lot of preachers are trying to cut wheat with a plow and they're trying to plant corn with a threshing machine and I think a lot of us are trying to do that. I think a lot of us are trying to bring people into forgiveness with the word of law when we should be using the word of grace and a lot of us are trying to bring people to an awareness of God with teaching love/love all the time when what we should be bringing is the word of law home to their hearts to convict them. Now spiritual wisdom is knowing which to do and the Holy Spirit gives you that. The Holy Spirit gave wisdom, you remember, to Philip when he went up to Ethiopia eunuch

and asked him, “Do you know what you’re reading?” That was the right thing to ask that eunuch at that time. Now that’s spiritual wisdom.

Do you see the next one is in Verse 8, “And to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.” I don’t think we need to dwell on that because I mentioned it as an illustration earlier on that the gift of knowledge is the ability to know what is in a person’s spirit. So, I remember one fellow who was dealing with someone who was seeking Jesus and suddenly this pastor saw a great white cockatoo, just saw it as a vision. Now knowledge doesn’t come to everybody, it doesn’t come to me like that, but it came as a great white cockatoo. So he said to the fellow, “Do you know anything about a big white cockatoo?” The fellow said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, I stole it four years ago.” And he wouldn’t confess that to God and that was what held him up and when he confessed it and dealt with it and was prepared to make restitution God dealt with the man. Now that’s the gift of knowledge you see. It’s knowing what is in a person’s spirit.

Now brothers, could I say this, that most of these gifts are probably ministered with the person very unconscious that he is ministering the gift. Probably that’s true. Probably we’re not very conscious at the time that we’re ministering that. I’ve had a number of people come into the study during this week so far and obviously they were ministered to as if I knew exactly what was in their spirits but I didn’t know. So often the Holy Spirit will give the gift of knowledge and get you to pass it on almost without you knowing. Now at other times, you’ll know very well. So you know, I love you brothers and I just know at times what is in your hearts.

It’s very important also to see that the gift is the utterance of knowledge not just the knowledge because I think a lot of us feel, “Ah yeah, I know what is in his heart so I minister it now,” and we shouldn’t. I think we have to be loving to each other very often and hold back and some things I see in you brothers and I’m sure you see in me and you just – no, God tells you, “Don’t utter just keep quiet about it and pray and let the brother come on in to this.” So it’s more important that you see that knowledge, the utterance of knowledge is something deeper than just knowledge itself.

Verse 9, “To another faith by the same Spirit.” This is working faith, you see, it’s not saving faith that comes when a person is willing to submit to God and believe that Jesus has died for their sins. But this is working faith. This is faith that works results in people’s lives. It’s the kind of faith that Mueller had, you remember, with the orphanages. He just prayed and prayed and God brought money and he built orphanages for thousands of homeless children just through the result of his prayers.

Now if you remember reading Mueller’s life he emphasizes that he was not driven to build the orphanages primarily for the children, though he really loved the children, but primarily to show the world that God was still a prayer answering God and so God granted him the gift of faith for that purpose. The gift of faith would really be seen in people like Brainerd who was among the red Indians where he obviously could not be understood by the Indians through a drunken interpreter. They couldn’t understand what he was trying to get over and yet Brainerd was given the gift of faith in long periods of prayer each day to pray for these Indians so that they came to the highest level of Christian living through the preaching that Brainerd did through the drunken interpreter. Now obviously, it didn’t come through what the interpreter was able to say. It obviously didn’t come through the spirit that came through the interpreter. It came direct from the Holy Spirit by revelation as a result of old Brainerd’s faith and that’s what we mean, you see, when we talk about the gift of faith.

Now, just if I could say a little about each it might be useful rather than spending a long time on certain gifts. "To another," Verse 9, "Gifts of healing by the one Spirit." Again, I don't think we should spend a long time on it because I used that as an illustration at the beginning. But the gift of healing can be manifested in many, many different ways and frankly, I think the Holy Spirit wants to bring a lot of us in the bodies around the world into now is such an atmosphere of Jesus' presence in an ordinary meeting. Such an atmosphere of love and peace. Such an atmosphere of brokenness as far as soulish powers are concerned, that people will come into the meeting and they'll just sense a healing. They'll just sense a healing in the atmosphere and they'll receive the healing without anyone doing anything.

It seems to me to keep us clear from this emphasis on people, "Oh, that man, you should see how he's used in healing." It seems that in these days Jesus wants to lead us a way from this preoccupation with individuals and lead us into a consciousness of the reality of the body of Christ. And that when a number of people come into real love and harmony with Jesus, and with the trinity family, and with each other, all the gifts of the Spirit begin to be manifested just naturally by the Holy Spirit. So the gift of healing I think maybe we should just go quickly on since I did use some examples about Katherine Kuhlman and Oral Roberts.

The next gift mentioned is in Verse 10, "To another the working of miracles." Miracles is almost in a sense apart from faith. It's a definite miracle that is worked for a real reason and purpose and as a sign not just for the sake of the healing but as a sign to people that God's super natural power is at work. It seems to me that's how it would differ from the gift of healing which is primarily concerned with bringing health to people. But the gift of miracles may be a gift of healing but is primarily from the point of view of a sign to show that God's super natural power is still at work here in the world. Carvasso got into a coach you remember, in the 19th Century; there were 12 people in the coach. They road down two miles down the road and he got out again and the 12 people were Christians.

Now, that wasn't because he did a quick round with the Spiritual Laws booklet but because he had the gift at that moment of the miracle whereby God revealed Jesus so really to each of these people that they saw him and they did submit to him. The gift of miracles would be seeing, you remember, with Finney when he went into that weaving factory and there were two little girls tittering you remember, in one corner and he looked over at them and they tittered a little longer, and then they got nervous, and then the tears began to come down their eyes, and then one broke the thread you remember, and then they got worried, and then they started to weep quietly. Then another person at the next loom began to weep, and another person further down the factory floor began to weep and then gradually everybody began to get down on their knees and the manager who was still standing with Finney looked around and then he closed the factory for the whole day and they sought God.

Now that's a gift, that's a miracle you see. Now it is important brothers for us to see that this gift is still available to us and will be needed as we go out to be a Christian Peace Corps in God's world because that's the only thing we have to pit against massive economic systems of supply and support that Russia and America will give to different nations. We will have this power to work miracles and God will work them, you know, in us in regard to damning up waters for reservoirs, in regard to piping in electricity to people's home, in regards to transport of all kinds, problems of all kinds, God will work miracles for us. Now that's the gift of working miracles.

"To another prophecy." I think I shared that a little, that prophecy is the speaking forth of God's word and the speaking forth of the right word at the right moment. It's not just the ability to

preach you see there are people who preach with no gift of prophecy. There are people who preach just from their own knowledge of God's word and their own insight into human nature. But the gift of prophecy is being able to speak forth God's word to the right person at the right moment. Now that you can do in a constant situation. That you can do in an ordinary witnessing situation. That's where we're so far astray when we go up to a person who isn't a Christian and we blast them with all the gospel versus and we say, "Well, we ought to take them through the whole gospel and we ought to hit them with this, and this, and this."

This is why it's vital in any kind of booklet that outlines how to bring a person to Christ, it's vital that we receive from the Holy Spirit the gift of prophecy to speak the right verse at the right time to that person. And the gift of prophecy is that more even, you know, than speaking forth words about the future. Only on occasion did the prophets actually prophecy about the future. More often than not, if you examine the Old Testament prophets, they spoke the right word to the nation of people at the right time.

"To another the ability to distinguish between spirits." In Verse 10, and that's the discernment of spirits and that's what we need so badly today because there are a whole lot of people going around doing miracles of all kinds, speaking in tongues in all kinds of situation and so few people seem to have the discernment of the Holy Spirit to tell whether it's of the Spirit. Whether it's of an evil spirit or whether it's of the flesh. And brothers, that gift of discernment is essential. You can read a book that seems very scriptural and seems very fundamentalist in its doctrine and yet there can be a subtle spirit of deception running through that book. So it's vital to have the discernment of Spirits not only to see what books to read but to see what a person is like really in their hearts.

It's not enough in these days, you see, to say, "Oh I was baptized with the Spirit. I speak in tongues. I have been used by God to bring miracles and healing." So were the people that opposed Moses that did the miracle of throwing their staffs down and turning them into snakes. So the Bible says will the antichrist be. He will be a person who comes doing many miracles like a wolf in sheep's clothing having all the appearances of power. And unless we have the discernment of the Spirit we can be led away after the antichrist thinking that it is Christ himself. So there's a great need for the discernment of spirits.

I'd just like to go quickly over that though a lot more needs to be said about it to the last gift because there is so much misunderstanding about it. "To another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues." Could I just state briefly because of the shortage of the time that if you examine 1 Corinthians 12 carefully you'll find outlined there in 12, and in 13, and particularly in 14, you'll find especially in 14, there are three occasions when tongues are used as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

One is in a believers meeting when only believers are present and there it's to be used only if there is an interpretation. If there is no interpretation then either the person themselves spoke inspired by a demon, or spoke inspired by the flesh, or spoke out of God's will. But it is not God's will for that tongue to come forth at that moment unless there is an interpretation. And the problem is with the person who speaks in tongues. You may say, "What about the interpreter could they not be disobedient of the Holy Spirit?" The Holy Spirit knows before he inspires a person to speak in a tongue that there's a person present to interpret. So first of all a tongues when it's used in a believers meeting must be accompanied by someone who has given the interpretation by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, you'll see in 1 Corinthians 14 especially, that tongues can be used in private prayer without interpretation and there the tongues simply express the glory, and the sense of praise that you have for God in the midst of your private prayer. And it's accompanied by a great sense of elevation and a sense that you want to glorify God, "Father, you're wonderful, you're magnificent. Lord Jesus, you're beautiful," and you run out of words and your tongue trips over itself as the Holy Spirit gives you more words that you don't know from an unknown language to express your desire and your love for God. And there it's used without any interpretation and it comes very naturally from a sense of an inner desire to glorify and praise God.

When that inner desire isn't there brothers, it's questionable whether it's tongue. If you ever feel, "Oh, I must use the tongue today otherwise I'll lose it," then that's questionable if that's a tongue in the Spirit. A tongue in the Spirit comes when you have a great sense of a glory and a presence of your Father and you haven't enough words to express your love to him. Now a tongue comes then in private prayer. It up builds the person himself, and it elevates him and strengthens him and releases his spirit.

The third occasion is in the presence of unbelievers. And then always it's a known language such as was used in the day of Pentecost. It's a sign to unbelievers that God's power is present. That's why they said, you remember, "Do we not all hear speaking in our own language the wonderful works of God?" And often, you see, a person has been used I remember, Reverend Mirer was used by God in a certain situation to speak to a person in their own language and he didn't know the language at all and this person said, "How did you come to speak in perfect," whatever it was, "Arabian?" And he was amazed. But it was the Holy Spirit giving him a known language to speak to an unbeliever to convince the unbeliever that God's power was still available.

Now it's those three places you see, that the Holy Spirit in the Bible has told us tongues can be used and I think we need to be careful in the use of them and to look especially at the New Testament outline of a normal New Testament meeting and see that at the most two or three people speak in tongues and always in order and always to the up building of the body and to the up building of those present. In other words, where there are unbelievers present it's very questionable if you should ever use an unknown tongue.