

The Gift of the Holy Ghost



By
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MIRACULOUS GIFTS--WHY?

There is a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is true not only in the denominational world, but also in the church. No doubt, most of the problems we experience in matters of this kind grow out of the fact that we have failed to teach the truth as emphatically, as clearly, and as often as we should. I am convinced that our failure to teach as we should concerning the subject of the Holy Spirit stems largely from our own failure to have a clear understanding of the Bible teaching on the subject.

We need to have clear answers to such questions as: Why were early Christians endowed with miraculous powers? How were these powers imparted? How long were they to last? How does the Holy Spirit influence people today?

In dealing with these questions, two words need to be kept before us: (1) *revelation* and (2) *confirmation*. Every miracle performed by Christ and his disciples was in connection with the revelation and confirmation of the will of God. A failure to understand this fact has led thousands and thousands of people to go searching for miracles where there are none.

Consider first the matter of revelation. Did it ever occur to you, dear reader, that the apostles and others who preached the gospel in the first century had to do so without the benefit of a written New Testament? They did not own a copy of the New Testament, nor had they ever seen a copy of it; not a line of it had been written for the first few years of the church's existence. Yet they accurately and effectively preached the gospel. Neither this writer nor any other person living today could preach the gospel accurately if he did not have access to the written word. There is no man living today who preaches one single, solitary truth of the gospel that he did not learn, either directly or indirectly, from the

written revelation. But the apostles and others of the first century preached accurately the gospel of Christ before a line of the New Testament had been written. They were able to do so because they were miraculously endowed, and they were miraculously endowed to enable them to do so. Jesus had promised the apostles before his ascension that the Holy Spirit would be given to them, and that he would (1) teach them all things, (2) bring to their remembrance all things he (Jesus) had said to them, (3) guide them into all truth, and (4) show them things to come (John 14:26; 16:13). This is the reason they were able to preach without a copy of the New Testament. What would a man need with a written copy of the New Testament if the Holy Spirit were directly guiding him into all truth, teaching him all things, bringing to his remembrance everything that Jesus said, and showing him things to come? One who possessed the Holy Spirit in this manner could write the New Testament, which is precisely what these miraculously endowed men of the first century did.

We now have God's completely perfected revelation (II Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3). Nothing is to be added to it (Revelation 22:18-19). It already contains all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). The apostles could not have preached the gospel without miraculous endowments. But miraculous endowments today would not enable us to preach one single gospel fact, command, or promise which we cannot already preach. The apostles simply did not have what we have (the perfected revelation), and we do not have what the apostles had (miraculous endowments). They were miraculously endowed so they might receive God's revelation and give it to the world. No additional revelation is to be given; therefore, no present day miraculous endowments are needed.

Consider now the matter of confirmation. The gospel not only needed to be revealed; it also needed to be confirmed by miracles. The apostles and other preachers during the church's infancy, though inspired, could not prove their preaching by citing chapter and verse in the New Testament. In order to establish the authenticity of that which they preached, these early gospel

preachers performed miracles. In Mark 16:17-20 we are told that the miracles performed by the apostles were signs by which the gospel was confirmed. In other words, those who heard the preaching done by the apostles did not have to guess whether or not it was true. They saw the miracles performed and knew the preaching was true. Hebrews 2:3 says that the gospel "was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." The very next verse makes it clear that this confirmation was "with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

Please keep in mind the fact that this miraculous confirmation of the truth preached took place during an age when no preacher and no audience had ever seen a copy of the New Testament. Today those who preach may prove the truthfulness of that which they preach by directing attention to the New Testament; those who wish to examine the truthfulness of a thing preached may likewise open their New Testaments and investigate. Those who preached the gospel in the first century could prove its truthfulness by performing miracles; those who preach the gospel today may prove its truthfulness by citing proof from the New Testament. Those who heard the gospel preached in the first century could ascertain its authenticity by observing the miracles performed; those who hear the gospel preached today may ascertain its authenticity by investigating their New Testaments.

Miraculous endowments were given in the first century in connection with the revelation and confirmation of God's word. Now God's word has been completely revealed and thoroughly confirmed. The Bible stands today as God's perfectly completed and thoroughly confirmed revelation. It admits of no possible additional revelation. To claim miraculous powers today is tantamount to affirming that the Bible is not complete (needs further revelation), or that the truthfulness of the Bible is questionable (needs further confirmation). Neither of these is true. God's will needs no further revelation, and it needs no further confirmation.

Some would insist that miracles are needed today to persuade some to believe the Bible. But John 20:30-31 affirms

that the miracles written in the New Testament are sufficient to produce saving faith. Faith is produced by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), not by seeing a miracle. It is sometimes argued that there are some who will not believe the Biblical record of miracles, but would be convinced by seeing miracles performed. Our Lord's reply to such an argument is: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

MIRACULOUS GIFTS--HOW?

How were the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit imparted to those who received them? It will be observed that, with the exception of the apostles and the household of Cornelius, miraculous gifts were imparted only through the agency of the apostles of Christ. This fact is significant in that it makes it impossible for those living today to perform miracles, since none living today could possibly have come into direct contact with any of the apostles of Christ.

Acts 8:14-18 is a demonstration of the fact that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were given only through the agency of the apostles. Read the entire chapter. Philip (not the apostle by that name) had preached the gospel to the people in the city of Samaria. He had confirmed the word he preached by performing miracles. The people had been receptive to the truth and had been baptized. Acts 8:14-15 says:

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

Please observe that Philip, though himself miraculously endowed, did not impart miraculous gifts to those whom he had baptized. He was not an apostle, and had not the power to do so. The apostles at Jerusalem sent two of their own number, Peter and John, to do what Philip could not do, since he was not an apostle.

Until the apostles arrived on the scene, the Holy Spirit "was fallen upon none of them" (verse 16). But when the apostles arrived in Samaria, they (the apostles) laid "their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (verse 17). It was not through the laying on of Philip's hands that the Holy Ghost was given; it was through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (verses 18 and 19). It is obvious from this statement that Simon saw the apostles had power Philip did not have, that is, to lay hands on others and impart the Holy Ghost to them.

The very fact Peter and John came to Samaria under these circumstances shows the miraculous gifts of the Spirit could not be imparted except through the agency of the apostles.

Paul alluded to the fact that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit could be given only through the agency of the apostles when he stated that his desire to go to Rome stemmed partly from his desire to impart some spiritual gift unto the Roman Christians (Romans 1:11). If these gifts were imparted independently of the apostles, why would his presence at Rome have anything to do with their receiving any such gifts? Either he or some other apostle had to be present at Rome before the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit could be given, just as it was necessary for apostles to be present at Samaria before these gifts could be given.

In Second Corinthians 12:12 Paul refers to "the signs of an apostle." His own apostleship had been challenged by false teachers at Corinth, and he was defending its genuineness. His argument in its defense was the fact that he had performed the signs of an apostle, that is, he had done things only an apostle could do. In the very next verse he says, "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches . . . ?" What would their being equal to any other church in the brotherhood have to do with proving Paul's apostleship? The thing wherein they were not inferior to other churches was in the matter of spiritual gifts. Paul said as much in First Corinthians 1:7: "So that ye come behind in

no gift" The fact they had spiritual gifts proved the apostleship of the one through whom these gifts were given. But how could such be so, unless it were also true that spiritual gifts could be bestowed only through the agency of the apostles? If we should arrange Paul's argument syllogistically, it would look like this:

Major Premise: Miraculous powers can be given only through apostles.

Minor Premise: You (church at Corinth) received miraculous powers through me (Paul).

Conclusion: Therefore, I (Paul) am an apostle.

If, as many today claim, miraculous gifts can be received in some other way than through the agency of an apostle, then Paul's argument is without any validity. The fact that spiritual gifts were imparted only through the laying on of the apostles' hands proves there are none who perform miracles today.

We have stated that the household of Cornelius was an exception to the rule that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given through the hands of the apostles. A thorough discussion of this fact is impractical at this point, but a careful reading of the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts will make it clear that the purpose of the falling of the Holy Ghost upon the household of Cornelius was that the equality of Jews and Gentiles might be established. This was God's way of showing the prejudicial Jews that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. But this case is an exception to the rule, and all others who received miraculous powers of the Spirit did so through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

MIRACULOUS GIFTS--HOW LONG?

We have shown (1) that miraculous gifts were given to effect the revelation and confirmation of the will of God, and (2) that miraculous gifts were imparted only through the agency of the apostles. Since the will of God has been completely revealed and

thoroughly confirmed, and since there are no apostles today through whom miraculous gifts can be imparted, it necessarily follows that people today do not possess miraculous powers. In this section we will deal with some passages which tell how long the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were to endure.

Perhaps the lengthiest and most thorough discussion of miraculous gifts contained in the Bible begins in First Corinthians 12 and continues through chapter 14. Chapter 13, the *Love* chapter, is actually a contrast between the permanent nature of love and the temporary nature of spiritual gifts. Please observe verse 8: "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Now the question is, when shall miraculous prophecies, miraculous tongues, and miraculous knowledge cease and vanish away? The answer is in the next two verses: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Here supernatural knowledge and prophecy are mentioned as illustrative of all miraculous gifts. It is clearly stated that this knowledge and prophecy were "in part," referring to the fact that the great body of divine truth was not at that time completed or perfected. Part of God's divine revelation had been given, but part of it yet remained to be given. Until the revelation was completed or perfected, supernatural gifts were necessary. But "when that which is perfect" came, then these miraculous gifts would be done away. "That which is perfect" most assuredly refers to the perfect and complete New Testament of Jesus Christ.

Some, in an effort to escape the conclusion that supernatural gifts were to be done away with the completion of the New Testament, have tried to make "that which is perfect" refer to Christ. This would mean that miraculous gifts would continue until Jesus comes back again. Such an interpretation neither fits the context, nor can it be made to do so. It is obvious that the apostle is drawing a contrast between certain things that were temporary and certain things which would be permanent--things

that would be done away, and things that would remain. The things that would be done away were miraculous gifts, and they would be done away "when that which is perfect" was come. The things that would remain were faith, hope, and charity (love), and they would abide after "that which is perfect" was come. But how could faith and hope abide after "that which is perfect" was come, if "that which is perfect" refers to Christ? When Jesus comes again, our faith will become sight, and our hope will become a reality.

Paul was writing of a time when faith, hope, and charity would remain, but when miraculous gifts would be done away. It would be "when that which is perfect" was come. When the New Testament was completed or perfected, miraculous gifts were done away, but faith, hope, and charity (love) continue to abide with us.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WIELDS AN INFLUENCE TODAY

We have established (1) that miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to effect the revelation and confirmation of the will of God, (2) that these supernatural powers were imparted only through the laying on of the apostles' hands, and (3) that supernatural powers would and did cease when "that which is perfect," that is, the completed New Testament, came. It is our purpose in this section to show that the influence of the Holy Spirit upon people today is that, and only that, which he wields directly or indirectly through the written word.

It should be remembered that the Holy Spirit has always wielded his influence upon the masses of the people by speaking to them. This was true during the early morning of time when Noah preached to the people concerning the flood. Peter tells us that it was by the Holy Spirit that this preaching was done during the time while the ark was in preparation (I Peter 3:18-20). This was also true during the time of the Mosaical law. Nehemiah 9:30 is illustrative of the way God spoke to and influenced those living

under the law: "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets...." Please observe that this verse says (1) that God testified, (2) that he did so by his Spirit, and (3) that the Spirit was in the prophets. The point is this: God's message has always been given through certain men selected of God and miraculously endowed by the Holy Spirit to communicate that message infallibly to the masses. The Holy Spirit never has guided anyone by feelings and urges. He has always guided by speaking and communicating his message in words.

David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (II Samuel 23:2). How did the Spirit of the Lord communicate his message? By speaking. How did he speak? He used the tongue of David. Notice another passage, this one from the New Testament: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts 1:16). Peter here attributes the authorship of that which is recorded in Scripture to the Holy Ghost. It was spoken by the mouth of David and written by the pen of David, but its author was the Holy Ghost. Peter affirms this very thing concerning all the Old Testament writings. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:20-21). The statement that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation means that the writers of scripture were not writing their private and personal views concerning the matters whereof they wrote; they were instead writing the word of God which was revealed to them by the Holy Ghost. It follows, then, that when we read the Old Testament we are reading the message given by the Holy Ghost to those who lived under the Old Testament.

The same can be said concerning the New Testament. First Corinthians 2:9 is a verse often read at funerals and misapplied to Heaven: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This verse does not refer to Heaven, as the context will show. It refers rather to the gospel of Christ, which had been hidden in past ages, but had now been revealed. The very next verse plainly states: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...." Now skip to verse thirteen: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth...." Paul here clearly affirms (1) that the truth was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, and (2) that the Holy Spirit gave him the words to use in the proclamation of that truth.

In another remarkable passage dealing with this matter, Paul states:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit [Ephesians 3:2-5].

Here is the matter of revelation and inspiration clearly set forth. The Spirit revealed the gospel to certain men, who in turn were inspired to write what had been revealed to them, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." When we read the New Testament we are reading that which was produced by revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To the extent we are influenced by the written word, we are influenced by the Holy Spirit; to the extent we fail to follow the teaching of the written word, we are failing to follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the written word. First Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly...." Do you want to know what the Spirit says? Then read the New Testament. Seven times in chapters two and three of Revelation we find this statement: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." If you want to know what the Spirit says to the churches, read what is written in those chapters.

When we read the New Testament we are reading the message of the Holy Spirit to those of us who live under the New Testament.

From time to time we hear certain religious people speak of feeling "moved" to do certain things; or some speak of doing "what the Lord lays on" their hearts. This is all traceable to the mistaken idea that the Holy Spirit communicates his message to man by causing man to have certain feelings and urges. In no age of the world has the Holy Spirit influenced man in any such ambiguous way. He has always communicated his message by speaking words; the words the Holy Spirit speaks to you today are the words recorded in your New Testament.

If our doing the will of God depended upon the accurate interpretation of our urges, our hunches, and our feelings, we could never be absolutely sure whether or not we are doing the will of God. Our only assurance would be our own subjective reasoning. As it is, we have the will of God (the Holy Spirit's message for us) clearly recorded on the pages of the Bible. When we read the Bible, we can say with absolute certainty, "This is the message of the Holy Spirit to us."

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

So far we have established four important facts with reference to the Holy Spirit: (1) that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were for the purpose of revealing and confirming the gospel, (2) that they were imparted only through the hands of the apostles, (3) that they lasted only until such time as the New Testament was completed, and (4) that the only influence wielded by the Holy Spirit today is the influence wielded through the written word. Some who are in complete agreement with these four propositions believe, nevertheless, that the Holy Spirit personally dwells in the Christian. This personal indwelling is said not to be through the word of God, but in conjunction with the word. We believe this idea is erroneous, but the error involved is of little consequence, so long as one understands that the Holy Spirit influences the

Christian only through the written word.

Unfortunately there are those who are in complete agreement with the first three propositions listed above, but who do not agree with the fourth. They believe in a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit does something for the Christian as he dwells in him. One evangelist of note said: "I do not believe...the Holy Spirit operates only through the word of God in the life of a Christian.... If he does nothing as the indwelling Spirit, there is no advantage to having Him in us." Because there are those who believe the Holy Spirit operates in some way other than through the word, and because this belief is based upon the idea that the Holy Spirit personally dwells in the Christian, we will deal with that idea in this section.

In order to understand properly the Bible verses that deal with the Holy Spirit it is necessary that the reader keep in mind the fact the New Testament was written largely to churches and individuals who possessed supernatural gifts of the Spirit. When a letter written to a church or an individual possessing supernatural gifts referred to that church or individual's possessing the Holy Spirit, such reference would most naturally be understood to refer to those supernatural gifts. Suppose you had lived in the first century and had received the miraculous endowments of the Spirit through the laying on of an apostle's hands. And suppose an apostle wrote you a letter referring to the fact that you had received the Holy Spirit; to what would you think he was referring? Rather than thinking he was referring to a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you would most naturally understand his reference to be to that which you had received through the laying on of that apostle's hands. It is a mistake for us to read the New Testament as if it were written to people who already had a New Testament instead of people who, for the most part, possessed or were familiar with miraculous endowments.

Take for example First Corinthians. Paul reminded the Corinthians in the very outset that they were behind none in the possession of Spiritual gifts (1:7). In chapters twelve to fourteen

he discusses the proper use of those gifts of the Holy Spirit. When he makes reference in 3:16 to the fact that the Spirit of God dwelt in them, would they understand him to be referring to a non-miraculous, personal indwelling? It will help us tremendously in our understanding of the passages dealing with the Holy Spirit if we will remember that the entire New Testament was written during the miraculous age.

A second thing one must keep in mind in studying passages that deal with the Holy Spirit is the fact that, in connection with the Scheme of Redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit has to do with the matter of revelation and confirmation of God's will. The fact that a man had the Spirit, which enabled him to perform miracles, proved that the preaching he did was true. In other words, one's having the Spirit proved he had the word of God. Today those who argue that the Spirit personally indwells the Christian argue in reverse; they use the word of God in an effort to prove they have the Spirit. Passages that deal with the Holy Spirit need to be understood in the light of what we know was the Spirit's work in connection with the Scheme of Redemption. Does a non-miraculous personal indwelling have anything to do with the matter of revelation and confirmation?

A third thing which one must remember in the study of this subject is the fact the Bible should be allowed to be its own interpreter. Several places in the New Testament refer to the fact that some received or were given the Holy Spirit. In most cases it is quite obvious from the immediate context that the reference is to the reception of miraculous powers. For example, when we are told in Acts 8:14-18 about the apostles' coming from Jerusalem to Samaria and imparting the Holy Ghost to the Samaritans, we read such expressions as, "that they might receive the Holy Ghost," "they received the Holy Ghost," "the Holy Ghost was given," and "he may receive the Holy Ghost." We have no difficulty in understanding that it is the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost that is under consideration. The context shows such to be the case here, as in many other passages. (Other passages the reader may want to examine in this respect are Acts 10:44-47

and 19:1-5.)

There are some passages, however, which refer to some's having received the Holy Spirit without specifying in the immediate context that it is a reference to supernatural gifts. Instead of allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, some have concluded that these passages refer to a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every Christian. In order to reach such a conclusion, one must overlook the fact that the New Testament was written largely to those who possessed supernatural gifts, and he must overlook those passages which tell us in plain language what it means to receive the Holy Spirit. A statement to the effect that some would or did receive the Holy Ghost is no proof of a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This should be especially apparent when we consider that the people to whom such statements were made had knowledge of the Holy Spirit only in connection with the matter of revelation and confirmation of God's word.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST IN ACTS 2:38

We say again that, if all who believed in the non-miraculous personal indwelling were in agreement that the only influence wielded by the Spirit upon the Christian is that wielded through the Bible, we would consider this error of little consequence, and likely would not deal with it in this discussion. Unfortunately such is not the case, for there are some who reason that if the Holy Spirit personally dwells in the Christian he must do something for the Christian by dwelling in him. Else there would be no need for a personal indwelling.

Acts 2:38 is a passage most frequently used to prove a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

It is argued that those who repented and were baptized were promised the gift of the Holy Ghost. But please observe that this verse does not define "the gift of the Holy Ghost." It merely promises "the gift of the Holy Ghost" to those who would obey the gospel. For a definition we will have to go to one of the several passages which speak of the gift of the Holy Ghost in a context where it is clearly defined. We would suggest Acts 8:14-18. Here we read of some who obeyed the gospel and who "received the Holy Ghost" (verse 17). To them it was "through laying on of the Apostles' hands" that "the Holy Ghost was given" (verse 18). It is clear from the context that the gift of the Holy Ghost--at least in Acts 8--is the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 10:45 is another passage which helps define the gift of the Holy Ghost. It says that "the gift of the Holy Ghost" was poured out on the household of Cornelius, resulting in their speaking in tongues and magnifying God. This obviously refers to that which was miraculous.

Another passage which shows what the inspired men had in mind when they referred to someone's receiving the Holy Ghost is Act 19:1-6. Paul asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (verse 2). The context will show that he had in mind the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost, which he later imparted by laying his hands on them (verse 6).

This definition will fit Act 2:38. The people to whom Peter was speaking had witnessed a miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and had asked the meaning of it. Peter had answered them by quoting Joel's prophecy of a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon "all flesh." In verse 33 Peter had attributed that which the people saw and heard to the fact that Jesus had "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." When he said to them, "repent and be baptized . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," what would they be expecting? A non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Spirit? If so, where had they learned about anyone's receiving the Spirit personally and yet non-miraculously?

We admit there are some difficulties with the position that

the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2:38 is the supernatural power imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands. But we believe there is an acceptable and credible answer to every argument which can be advanced against this position. One difficulty seen by some is the fact that this position requires that one contend the first part of the verse applies today, while the latter part was limited to the miraculous age. This difficulty disappears when one sets forth an explanation of Mark 16:16, 17. Verse 16 applies today, but verse 17 was limited to the miraculous age. And, after all, was not Peter in Act 2 laboring under the Great Commission of Mark 16? The Great Commission of Mark 16 (1) stated conditions of pardon, (2) offered salvation, and (3) promised miraculous powers. Peter, laboring under that commission, (1) stated conditions of pardon, (2) offered salvation, and (3) promised miraculous powers. Why should we expect anything less?

Another difficulty which some see lies in the fact that the language of verse 39 seems to promise the gift of the Holy Ghost to every person in every age who would repent and be baptized. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This language is intended to embrace Jew and Gentile alike. "Unto you, and to your children" refers to Jews. "All that are afar off" refers to Gentiles (cf. Ephesians 2:13). But the "as many as the Lord our God shall call" is the part that gives difficulty. Some feel that it just must be made to include more than Christians of the miraculous age. But must it, when it is explaining a prophecy concerning the Spirit's being poured out upon "all flesh"? If one can squeeze "as many as the Lord our God shall call" into the framework of a prophecy that talks about "all flesh," "your sons and your daughters," "your young men. . .and your old men," and "my servants. . .and my handmaidens," then the difficulty will disappear.

One thing worthy of note before we leave this passage is Luke's reference to the *promise*. The book of Luke closes with an account of Christ's ascension. Before he ascended, he said, "And,

behold, I send the *promise* of my father upon you" (Luke 24:49). This is an obvious reference to the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As Luke takes up the narrative in Acts 1, he refers to the Lord's admonition to "wait for the *promise* of the Father" (Acts 1:4), another reference to supernatural power. After the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2, Peter explained that what they had seen and heard was connected with "the *promise* of the Holy Ghost" (2:33). Then verse 39 says, "For the *promise* is unto you" Would Theophilus, to whom Luke and Acts were written, get the impression that the people in Acts 2 were *promised* a non-miraculous personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost? Did Peter switch *promises*, between verse 33 and verse 39? The *promise* in Acts 1:4 is miraculous. The *promise* in Acts 2:33 is miraculous. How could one conclude that the *promise* of Acts 2:39 is not miraculous?

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST IN ACTS 5:32

"And we are his witnesses of these things: and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). This verse states the fact of God's having given the Holy Ghost to "them that obey him." Like Acts 2:38, this verse does not define the gift of the Holy Ghost. Does Acts 5:32 teach that the Holy Spirit personally dwells in Christians in a non-miraculous way? We do not believe it does, and we shall set forth reasons why.

In the first place, the statement is made in a context in which miraculous powers of the Spirit are discussed. Verses 12-16 of this same chapter state:

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. . . Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities

round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. It was this very fact that caused the high priest and those with him to be filled with indignation (verse 17), and to put the apostles in prison. That very night, by means of a miracle, the prison doors were opened and the apostles were sent to preach in the temple. Against this background, when Peter referred to "the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," those to whom he was speaking, as well as Theophilus to whom the book of Acts was written, would naturally understand him to be referring to the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit so evident in this chapter.

A second thing which leads us to reject the idea this passage is speaking of a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the fact that Peter's statement is designed to argue that the apostles were obedient to God. These to whom Peter was speaking were the religious leaders. Theoretically, the only thing Peter would need to do to obtain their approval of the actions of the apostles would be to show that their actions were in obedience to God. His argument, arranged syllogistically, is as follows:

Major Premise: God gives the Holy Ghost only to those who obey him.

Minor Premise: God has given the Holy Ghost to us, as is evidenced by the miracles performed by us.

Logical Conclusion: Therefore, we are obedient to God.

This argument of Peter would have no strength at all separate and apart from the miracles performed by those to whom the Holy Ghost was given. Hence, what is under consideration in Acts 5:32 is the fact that supernatural powers of the Spirit were possessed by the apostles to prove that they were not liars and disobedient, as had been charged.

A third thing that causes us to believe the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 5:32 is the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost is the use of the word "witnesses." How could a non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Spirit possibly be a witness? Let us

examine two other passages where reference is made to the Spirit's being a witness. The first is John 15:26-27:

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

We know of none who would say the testimony of the Spirit in this passage refers to something accomplished through a non-miraculous, personal indwelling. But look at the similarity between this passage and Acts 5:32. This passage says, ". . . he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness." Acts 5:32 says, "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost. . . ." Is not Acts 5:32 a fulfillment of the promise of John 15:26-27?

The second passage we mention in this connection is Hebrews 2:3-4:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Here is a clear reference to the testimony given by the apostles of Christ coupled with the supernatural workings of the Holy Ghost. And it is said in this passage that God bore "witness." Is not the language of Hebrews 2:3-4 descriptive of the very things that took place in Acts 5? If not, what is lacking? What else would we have to find in that chapter to be able to say Acts 5 is an example of what Hebrews 2:3-4 is talking about?

Some who believe Acts 2:38 and 5:32 are talking about an ordinary, non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Spirit will even concede that those who originally heard these two statements made by Peter probably did, at the time, think he was referring to the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, but later learned he was speaking of the ordinary, non-miraculous, personal indwelling. Such a thought not only seems far-fetched, but also raises another difficult question, that is, where did these later learn they were mistaken in their understanding of these statements?

Before closing this part of the discussion we will make some brief observations concerning Ephesians 1:13-14, which states: ". . . ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" These verses have been used by some to try to sustain the idea of an ordinary, non-miraculous, personal indwelling of the Spirit. But it should not take a great deal of reflection to conclude that the words *sealed* and *earnest* could not refer to an ordinary, non-miraculous, personal indwelling. The very nature of a seal and of earnest demands they both be something visible and tangible. It is easy to understand how the supernatural powers of the Spirit could be referred to as a "seal," for such constituted God's "seal" of approval of those who were preaching the truth. It is easy to understand how supernatural gifts could serve as the "earnest" or guarantee of the Christian's inheritance, for the supernatural gifts actually confirmed, or guaranteed the authenticity of the gospel which was being preached. How could a non-miraculous indwelling do such?

There are numerous other passages which make reference to the fact of some's receiving the Holy Spirit; and in some cases the immediate context does not make clear what it means to receive the Holy Spirit. It seems to me these references to receiving the Holy Spirit simply must be understood in the light of what we know, from other passages, that it meant to receive the Holy Spirit during the time the New Testament was being written.

THE INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God [Romans 8:26-27].

This passage is urged in support of a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and is interpreted to mean that the unutterable

desires or groanings of the Christian are by the Holy Spirit received and translated into language the Father can understand, and then presented to him. While we freely confess that this is a difficult passage, we do not believe the foregoing to be an accurate exposition. The reasons are as follows: (1) This exposition is inconsistent with what we know of the work of the Holy spirit in connection with the Scheme of Redemption, that is, revealing the mind of God to man. Instead of the Spirit's revealing the mind of *God* to *man*, this interpretation of the passage has the Spirit revealing the mind of *man* to *God*. (2) It suggests an inability or weakness on the part of the Father to understand our prayers without the Holy Spirit's translating them. How can this be reconciled with such statements as the one recorded in Matthew 6:8? "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (3) It is most assuredly inconsistent with the view that this is a work accomplished by the non-miraculous personal indwelling of the Spirit, and that such is a special benefit peculiar to Christianity and not enjoyed by the faithful in previous dispensations. If this is accomplished through the non-miraculous personal indwelling of the Spirit, and if the non-miraculous personal indwelling of the Spirit is a blessing peculiar to the Christian age, then how could Abraham, or Elijah, or any of the Old Testament characters pray, with no Holy Spirit to intercede for them? We believe these three things are enough to cause serious doubt about the view that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers, translates them into acceptable language, and then presents them to the Father.

Then what is the meaning of the passage? It is the conviction of this writer that the passage refers to the fact that during the miraculous age Christians were inspired in their praying, particularly those who led the prayers in the public assemblies. Before this idea is rejected outright, please give consideration to the following facts: In the first place, we know that there was such a thing during the miraculous age as inspired praying. In First Corinthians 14:14 Paul spoke of praying in an unknown tongue. But the only way one could pray in an unknown

tongue would be to pray by inspiration. If one prayed by inspiration in an unknown tongue, one might also pray by inspiration in such a way as to be understood. This is precisely what is meant by the very next statement in the chapter: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." "With the spirit" in this passage means by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The next verse will bear out this fact. "Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" This is another clear reference to praying in an unknown tongue, and it is referred to as blessing "with the spirit." The preceding verse makes it plain that it is not enough to pray by inspiration ("with the spirit"), but the public prayers must also be uttered in a language that can be understood by those in the assembly ("with the understanding"). Ephesians 6:18 mentions praying "in the Spirit," and Jude 20 refers to "praying in the Holy Ghost." Incidentally, Thayer says to be *εν πνευματι* 'in the Spirit' means "to be in the power of, be actuated by, inspired by, the Holy Spirit." He then cites Romans 8:9 as an example of this usage (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Page 211). Could it just be that the prince of lexicographers is correct in his observations on this verse? This is in the same chapter with the passage we are presently discussing.

In the second place, such an understanding of this passage would be in harmony with what we know about the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Scheme of Redemption. It is a matter that has to do with confirmation and revelation of the will of God. Have we not often labored the point that miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit did for Christians during that age what the written word of God does for us today? How could a man lead a public prayer who had never seen a copy of the New Testament? Would you call on a man to lead prayer in a public assembly who had never seen a copy of the New Testament? But during the first century there were inspired men, whereas today we

have an inspired book, the Bible, to enable us to know how to pray. Those people in the early days of Christianity literally did not know how to pray, for it had not been recorded in a book for them to learn. Inspiration directed their praying, just as it directed their preaching.

It may be objected that the verses under consideration simply do not say that. The truth is, whatever the verses say, they do not simply say; the language is somewhat obscure, and even the translators of the King James Version were not absolutely sure about the translation, as is evidenced by the marginal note in verse 27. And after all, do you really believe the Holy Spirit speaks to the Father "with groanings which cannot be uttered"? You see, it is not a simple passage.

Please read the following paraphrase of Romans 8:26, 27: Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities--the weakness of having longings which we know not how to express to God in prayer. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us. And the Holy Spirit who searches the hearts knows what the longings of the spirit of man are, so that he is able to give us the words whereby to express these longings in a manner pleasing to God.

Please be assured that I am not trying to prove a position by a paraphrase I have made myself. But look at these verses as they are quoted from the King James Version in the beginning of this section, and see how we arrived at this paraphrase. Let the phrase "with groanings which cannot be uttered" describe "our infirmities." That makes more sense than having the Holy Spirit "groaning." In verse 27 let "he that searcheth the hearts" refer to the Holy Spirit, and let "Spirit" refer to the spirit of man. Then substitute the marginal reading, "that" for "because" and the above paraphrase becomes at least possible.

We say again that our own paraphrase certainly does not prove the validity of our argument. It really does nothing more than present our view of what the passage is saying. It has the advantage, however, of being in perfect harmony with what we believe the Bible teaches throughout.

CONCLUSION

We do not anticipate anything close to one hundred per cent agreement of brethren with all the things we have said in this discussion. Perhaps we have stimulated some thinking that will result in further study on the part of some. If so, we have accomplished that much good.

Please note this closing statement: The things we have discussed in the latter part of this tract are things that are profitable and should be of interest to Christians. All who are sincere desire fuller and deeper understandings in these areas, as well as in all other areas of revealed truth. But we may disagree over these matters, and still work together in peace and harmony; our view of these matters does not affect our obedience to God, so long as we are committed to the proposition that the written word is God's one and only means of speaking to us.

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