

More...Where our hunger meets His Promises

Ephesians 5:18 NLT

- Week 11 -

“Everyday Grace - the Practical Spiritual Gifts”

Part 3

As we witness the darker things of our society, and we begin to intercede, praying for God to intervene, we find very quickly that we literally run out of words to pray. We find ourselves insufficient and we become overwhelmed by the needs we behold. Our own words seem feeble - they're just not enough for this - it's all bigger than what we're trying to express to God about what we're seeing.

We're talking about what, for some, has been very confusing in the Church. We're going through the manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit. The series is called More, and we are now in First Corinthians chapter twelve. In this context we've talked about several of these manifestation gifts (*manifest - to reveal or express*). These expression gifts of the Holy Spirit are *gifts* - they are good things. God says, *“I want you to have these, and I'm going to allow you to express My gifts.”* That's a *good thing!*

Remember, *“The Holy Spirit is not weird - people are. People that are weird with the Holy Spirit were weird before the Holy Spirit came upon them.”* We need to clarify that because there's a tendency to become afraid, based on what little bit we've seen, and we then become inoculated by the enemy to the legitimate things of God - to keep us away from the Holy Spirit - the very One we need to do what Jesus called us to do - the same Holy Spirit who enables us and empowers us to actually fulfil the Great Commission, and to fulfil the call of God on our lives.

The enemy loves to set us up and inoculate us from that, so we see just enough to be scared - just enough to say, *“Whoa! Father, I love You. Jesus, You're amazing. Holy Spirit... uh, I'm not so sure...”* Not out loud, but in our hearts, our behavior and responses. We do that because we're afraid of looking like *“them”*. But, be assured, the Holy Spirit is a Gentleman. So, as we continue to pray for the needs of those around us, and we lose all english words - we're depleted - we have nothing left, we begin to feel tension - angst - something comes up inside of us where we begin to pray in another language - another tongue - according to Scripture, which also calls it a prayer language - a language of intimacy between us and God.

They are not English words, and this is a language that is developed over time - a prayer language that can be *learned, developed, and fostered* through the years. In the beginning, when we get this, strange words and syllables come out of our mouths - we become carried along, like catching a wave, so to speak. When we begin to see the deeper needs in the world, we can run out of words in our prayer response in a short time, and may *shift* into what feels or seems like a language that we don't know.

When you get put in a position where you are so overwhelmed in your senses and in your emotions - you have no words for it, suddenly you will find the Holy Spirit begins to pray through you. That may sound strange, but the fact is, if you do not make room for *mystery* in your walk with God, you're going to have a very *boring* Christian life. It will become laborious and just duty, habit and ritual - and religious - but not if you will make room for mystery, where you learn to say, "Wow!" instead of "How?"

Romans 8:26 ESV

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

This is that! It's too deep for what our own language can come up with. Say this, "Make room for mystery." Write it down. Think about it and say, "Lord, I'm making room for mystery!" That means you might not understand fully everything you do as a follower of Christ. Regarding the issue of tongues and interpretation of tongues, which are manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit for *today* - for *now*, it's a mysterious thing, but *make room* for mystery.

verse 27: "And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

The Holy Spirit steps in when we *do not know* how or what to pray. It's a good thing to have a Helper like that - "Help me Holy Spirit. Good morning, Holy Spirit. Thank You for being my Helper - my Comforter - my Counselor - my Friend - my Advocate... and now, I understand through this scripture - my Intercessor - my Prayer Partner." That's the Holy Spirit!"

"The Holy Spirit enables and empowers us to live Life out of the overflow of his Person, Presence, and Power." Would it be okay if the Holy Spirit helped you? Would it be okay if you had Someone much bigger and smarter than you? - who understood all things and had the ability to be everywhere at once? - and would it be good for you to have that Person with you at all times?

That is the Person - work - Power - ministry of the Holy Spirit. People are strangely drawn to those whose buckets are filled to the brim and running over with his Presence. Are your buckets full? If they are overflowing, then just keep leaking out everywhere you go - God will refill them. People will be drawn to you. You will meet the sweetest people and then say, *"This is that!"*

The Life and Light of Jesus, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, wants to live his life not only in you, but through you, so that wherever you go - wherever you *are* (even not on purpose), he is building bridges of Life and Hope to people - where you live, where you work, and where you play, all as we grow up, grow out, and grow deeper. Doesn't that sound like a lot of fun? Does that sound like a boring Christian life? *No* - there's nothing boring *about* this!

1 Corinthians 13:1 ESV

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

This is the foundation. If we don't get *this* right, nothing else will be right. Notice that there's an assumption of speaking *"in the tongues of men and of angels,"* but, if we don't have *Love...*

1 Corinthians 13:3 NASB

"And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Paul introduces spiritual gifts to the small groups of people - anywhere from fifty to a hundred and fifty at any given time. Think about Paul writing this to small house churches, or outposts - mission churches that were relatively new. It changes the tone, timbre, and context of these letters which brought correction and instruction into them as they tried to do Life, as this new body of believers and as new churches.

1 Corinthians 12:1 ESV

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed."
verse 7 - *"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

These gifts are not given to you *for you*, but to be a blessing to others - it's not about *me*, it's about we - and that's why they're given.

As we discussed before, concerning another of the declarative gifts - the gift of prophecy (a message of encouragement from God spoken or delivered through a person), every person has the enablement or ability of the Holy Spirit to prophecy. It is a word or message of encouragement - and as you speak it, it provides lift for the other person - and it's a message from the heart of God to that person - but *you* get to deliver it - you get to be the *messenger*.

What a privilege to participate and co-operate with God, and co-labor with Christ - bringing Life and Hope to somebody else. *That* is the Spirit of prophecy. In the new testament, there are specific functions and criteria for scriptural prophecy. We're not talking about old testament prophets here - that's comparing apples and oranges - two completely different things.

Tongues is defined as: *one of the declarative gifts of the Holy Spirit - a message from God in a language unknown to the person through whom the message comes*. One example of that is on the day of Pentecost, where they spoke in actual languages that they didn't know, but they were languages that *were known* by others in attendance for Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon those brand-new believers (literally up to twenty thousand people) that heard Peter from the steps of the Temple declaring the Gospel - the Good News of Jesus Christ - and the Holy Spirit came as a Mighty Rushing Wind.

And when that happened, they began to declare the Gospel in the languages of all people of the nations that had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. That is one form of tongues. Another is actually a language you don't know, and maybe no one knows - *glossolalia*. It's a different thing, but apparently it is a tongue "of men and of angels." And that is an unknown tongue or language.

There is also a *prayer language* - the third form of tongues - a language of *intimacy* between you and God. It is available to you - to *each* of us. Some of us may think, "*That is so weird!*" - but yet we talk to our *dogs* in a language that no one else knows! (*think babbling-baby-puppy talk*). *That's* not english - and nobody thinks it's weird - because it's your *baby*... right? We talk to our dogs in an unknown tongue - and *they* know what it is.

There is a prayer language that becomes developed with time - that when you're talking to God, there's a similar dynamic, because it's intimate. There are numerous times in our lives of following Jesus where our words just don't cut it. It doesn't come up against our will - it's something that is controllable - something we do as an act of volition - cognitively - but by faith we believe that it is of the Spirit. We just know that when we are praying to God - the God-head - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - in our prayer language, we might not do it out loud, but it builds us up in our most holy faith (according to Jude 1:20). It is intimate. It's something that's between God and us *alone*.

Next is the *interpretation of tongues* - another of the manifestation gifts. It follows right on the heels of *tongues*. It is defined as: *understanding and expressing the thought or intent of the message given in tongues*. It is an interpretation - not a translation. Under the category of a publicly-spoken word. Someone may have a message in tongues for the church or in an assembly. Remember, Paul was dealing with groups of ten to fifteen people. Imagine the possible confusion in a group of four hundred or more people.

This is why this has become so confusing in the Church. A message in tongues that is interpreted (expressing the spirit of the message) can be powerful. Properly, those who give the messages would be known by the leadership of the church - having a relationship built around trust (both the person speaking forth the tongue, and the person presenting the interpretation) - relational equity, not just as strangers showing up in somebody's church-house and hijacking the service, creating a disruption.

That can convey the message, *"I don't ever want to be around anything like that again"* - inoculating people against a very wonderful and biblical gift of the Holy Spirit or recognizing it as a "one-off". and not letting it impact your heart to pursue spiritual gifts.

The Tongues and Prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:1-4 NLT

"Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives - especially the ability to prophesy. For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church."

Love is the highest goal, but desire these gifts of the Spirit, especially to prophecy. The three criteria for prophecy are: *it strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them*, and also *it strengthens the entire church*.

Paul then says, "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up." (1 Corinthians 14:5 ESV). He says that prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues unless someone interprets.

1 Corinthians 14:9 ESV

“So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.” [If it’s for we, it’s legit - if it’s for me, keep it to yourself.]

1 Corinthians 14:13-17 ESV

Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. [14] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful [you don’t know the meaning] [15] What am I to do? [you pray, “Lord what does this mean?”] I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. [16] Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? [17] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.

Paul says, *“I want to be clear - I want people to understand so that we’re all blessed and encouraged - not just me.”* He makes this very clear, but it has gotten so convoluted in the churches, and it has unfortunately and sadly become divisive, but only because we’ve gotten away from Scripture - the Word. *Let the Word interpret the Word.*

1 Corinthians 14:18-20 ESV

“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.”

This is valuable to Paul - *in a church meeting*, it needs to be understandable. There is the boundary and criteria. If it doesn’t bless others, keep it to yourself and let your own spirit be enlarged in your conversation with God. The last thing we want to be is divisive and creating confusion for another person who’s just trying to get to Jesus. But because of our own preferences or in thinking we have a *right* to say it out loud (as Christians we don’t have rights - only privileges and permission by God)

1 Corinthians 14:20 ESV

“Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.” Be mature. We pray for a revival of maturity in the body of Christ. *“Lord help us grow up, grow out and grow deeper - to act like adults.”* Where the world says of the Church, *“Wow, they’re different, in spite of their ‘stuff’, they get it.”* And the world would beat a path to our door if we will be mature. *May God give us Grace to grow up!*

1 Corinthians 14:23 NLT

“Even so, if unbelievers or people who don’t understand these things [NKJ: uninformed or unbelievers] come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy.” [they were following God, but they were not following biblical protocol.]

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 NLT

“...They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. [28] But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.” We know them by relationship - what gift they carry - otherwise let them keep silent in the church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 NLT

“Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. [33] For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God’s holy people.”
Control - the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You *can* turn it off and on.

1 Corinthians 14:40 NLT

“But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.”

The goal is maturity as we walk through this issue and others. This need not be a scary issue as we navigate these biblical and scriptural issues. First of all, it’s not about *me* - it’s about *we* - and if the gifts that we’re exercising aren’t blessing “*we*”, then we need to keep them to ourselves.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word and how Your Word interprets Your Word. You give us understanding, insight, revelation, and comprehension. Lord, our heart is to grow up, grow out, and grow deeper. But, Lord, as we continue to learn, navigate, and walk through these spiritual gifts that are for us and the whole Body, we want to operate in wisdom and maturity to express and manifest them in alignment with Your Scripture and Your Word.

Lord, as we do, we grow up into Christ into all things, and that is our heart. So, thank You for teaching us today. Holy Spirit You are the Spirit of Truth. What is it that You would have us walk away with today? Teach me - help me understand. I'm here to learn and to grow. Jesus, we turn to You. We want to change our mind, because we need Your help - we need You to come in and take over. We give You our hearts. We give You our lives. We love You and honor You. In Jesus' name. Amen