



## **BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit's Work of Giving Spiritual Gifts - II: the Temporary Gifts”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] ...a blessing upon us as we continue our study of spiritual gifts in the New Testament. We pray that Thou will direct our thinking and enable us to understand the passages that have to do with these important bestowals of capacity for service in the work that Thou art calling each one of us to do. We pray that tonight we may come to understand something of the plan and program that Thou hast for the church. And we pray, Lord, for any who may be here who do not yet know Jesus Christ as Savior. Wilt Thou work in their hearts. And for us who are Christians, we pray that this may be a time of edification.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We are studying “The Holy Spirit's Work of Giving Spiritual Gifts.” And last time, we considered the subject of permanent spiritual gifts. And tonight, we want to consider the Holy Spirit's work of giving temporary spiritual gifts. And then for the next two times, the Lord willing, we will deal with the subject of tongues which is such a vital question today in the minds of many who are Christians.

But tonight, we are going to deal with the other temporary gifts. And will you turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4 and let’s read a few verses beginning with verse 7. I think we’ll stop at verse 11 tonight. Ephesians 4, verses 7 through 11. Paul writes “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” And again, notice, spiritual gifts are given to every Christian. Every one of us has at least one. “Wherefore he saith when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” And Paul has quoted a passage from Psalm 68 in order to support the statement that he made in verse 7. And, now, he continues. “And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.”

Now, that really should not be rendered quite that way. It would be much simpler and, I think, truer to the Greek to say “And he gave apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastor-teachers.” You remember that we talked about these latter two really being one gift, last time.

Now, I think, I want to read a passage from 1 Corinthians 12. So turn back a few pages to 1 Corinthians 12 and let’s read verses 28 and 29, 1 Corinthians 12, verse 28 and verse 29, and we will be referring from time to time to both of these passages. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles?” And remember I said that in Greek we can tell what kind of answer the Apostle expects by the particle that he uses in the sentence or question. And Paul has used the particle which expects the negative answer and so we should render verse 29 “All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gifts of healing, do they? All do not speak in with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?” So that

text, we pointed out last time, was one of the texts that shows just as plainly as it could show that the gift of tongues is not a gift for everybody but only for some even in the early days of the Christian Church.

Now, tonight, The Holy Spirit’s Work of Giving Spiritual Gifts: The Temporary Gifts. Now, before we look again at our subject, I want to also make a few remarks by way of review, in order that we may be able to distinguish our terms. Remember, we referred to the term, the gift of the Spirit. And we said that the term the gift of the Spirit refers either to the Day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to inaugurate the age of the Spirit or to his coming to indwell every believer when they believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ. And so when we use the term the gift of the Spirit, we may refer to the Day of Pentecost and say this age is characterized by the gift of the Spirit who came on the Day of Pentecost who now is working throughout this age to glorify the Son and do the will of the Son or we may refer to the day when we were converted when we were given the Holy Spirit. The gift of the spirit is his gift to the gift of the Spirit to come and indwell us permanently from the day of our conversion on. Then we talked about, or attempted to define, the gifts of the Spirit. And we used this term, the gifts of the Spirit to refer to the spiritual abilities bestowed upon each believer at new birth. That is as a rule every believer has at least one and the spiritual gifts are for divine service. God has given apostles and prophets and pastor-teachers and helps and governments and all of the other gifts with a view to the service of God. And then we talked about the grace. Now, we, of course, are speaking about gifts. But, we also referred to the graces of the Spirit.

Now, the graces of the Spirit is a term by which we may refer to the spiritual virtues that are produced in the life of the Christian by the Holy Spirit. This is a term that equals the fruit of the Spirit. The virtues of that fruit of the Spirit, which is a nine-fold kind of fruit are the graces of the Spirit. Now, every Christian in his Christian life should exhibit some of the graces of the Holy Spirit; that is, the graces produced by the Holy

Spirit. They are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness. These are graces produced by the Holy Spirit.

By the way, it is an anomaly to look at a Christian and to find a Christian an ungracious kind of person. I would think that the genuine Christian, who has been a Christian for some time and who is led by the Holy Spirit in his life, a life characterized by obedience to the Lord, would not have to read Emily Post’s book. They would know just by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst, the right thing to say and the right thing to do. And ultimately, they would be able to teach Emily a few tricks, no doubt.

We also referred to the offices of the Spirit. Now, the offices of the Spirit are, for example, elder and deacon, of course, priest. Everybody is a priest. Only certain ones are elders and only certain ones are deacons. These are gifts, offices that are given to men in the local church in the case of elders and deacons in order that they may oversee the work of God. They are spiritual positions in the local church. It may be better to call them spiritual functions but we don’t need to go into that question right now. So they are given by the Holy Spirit for the oversight of the local church, the oversight and care. These then are terms that we ought to bear in mind, the gift of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the graces of the Spirit, the offices of the Spirit. And we are, of course, speaking of the gifts of the Spirit.

So our concern then is with the spiritual abilities which have been given to us when we believed in Jesus Christ, sovereign bestowments in order that we may serve the Lord acceptably. I think that our spiritual gifts are to be used in the local church so that we each may find our place in the local church. And then also they are to be used in our individual life as opportunity may arise for their use.

Last Wednesday when I went up to Oklahoma City, I’ve been teaching the theology of the Holy Spirit in the Metropolitan Baptist Church there this spring, and when I got in the car out at the airport, two people were in the car who were relatively new to the church, Metropolitan Baptist Church. And they were saying “We want to find our

place in this church, which we’ve been attending now for several months and we don’t know exactly what to do. What should we do, Dr. Johnson?” And so I tried to explain to them that they had been given a spiritual gift and it was their duty to exercise that spiritual gift in the local church. And so they should go to the leaders of the church and just express their willingness. And with their care and oversight, the positions, the spiritual positions of elder and deacon, they might be able to find their place in the local church.

Now, these gifts we divided into two types permanent gifts, which are given throughout the entire age from Pentecost to the present, and then temporary gifts. We spoke of the permanent gifts as being evangelist, pastor-teacher, gift of exhortation, ministry, ruling, giving, and faith. And I did not, by just selecting these seven gifts, mean to suggest that these are the “only” seven permanent gifts. We said there are over twenty spiritual gifts and I just picked these out as being the most important. There are several others that could be classified as permanent, too.

Now, we pointed out that the gift of giving, for example, is not the spiritual capacity for putting money in the collection plate on Sunday morning. Giving is, of course, something that every Christian should be exercised about. But the gift of giving is something beyond that, just like the gift of faith. Every Christian has faith. He has to have faith in order to be a Christian. It is his faith which is the means of appropriating the saving work of Jesus Christ. But the gift of faith is the unusual ability to trust God for great things in his service. And I gave you some illustrations which were simply illustrations that appeared to me to be illustrations of the gift of faith.

The other type of gift is the temporary gift and these are largely sign gifts. They are largely miraculous gifts. They are given in the birth and infancy of the church. And they were given for use during the birth and infancy of the church. The gift of apostleship, prophesy, wisdom. You needn’t put them down, we’re going to talk about

them in a moment, wisdom, knowledge, discerning of spirits, miracles, healings and tongues.

Can we really say that there are temporary gifts? That is a vital question. I think we can but I want to make one thing clear. The Bible has no specific text on this, so do not go out and say “Dr. Johnson says there are temporary gifts.” And when your friends say, “What text in the Bible teaches that?” Don’t look blank and realize for the first time that Dr. Johnson didn’t give you any text for that statement that he made. It does not say anywhere in the Bible, there are temporary gifts. Nor does it say, for that matter, there are no temporary gifts. Nor is it necessary that there be such a specific text, although, in view of the controversy about them, we might wish for one. I, secretly, wish there had been a text that said there are permanent spiritual gifts, and there are temporary spiritual gifts. That would enable me to get over my points much easier to my hardheaded friends. But there is no such text.

And, I wish there was a text that every Christian ought to be a Calvinist, but there isn’t. [Laughter] That, too, would help me a great deal. And, of course, if my friend, who is an Armenian, could find a text that says that the apostles were Armenians that would help him with me, because he knows I am hardheaded, too, about that. Now, there is, I say, no specific text, but remember, we fall back on this quite often; there is no specific text for the Trinity either. And yet, there are few doctrines that are clearer than the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible. But there is no text that says there is a Trinity.

Well how then can we say that there are temporary gifts? Well, I think, we can say these things. First of all, there are scriptural hints that certain gifts were temporary. Now, will you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2 in verse 4, Hebrews chapter 2 in verse 4? Now, while you’re finding verse 4 I’m going to read verse 3 and you listen as you look for that 4th verse. The writer of the Epistle says “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 to us by them that heard him.” Now, them that heard him are the apostles. “God

also bearing them witness, both with signs, wonders and diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will.” Now, notice, this is put in the past tense. He says “the salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, it was confirmed by them that heard him, unto us, and God bore them witness by these temporary spiritual gifts or these signed gifts and he puts it in the past tense.” Now, that is not an ironclad argument. It is simply a hint, as I said.

Second, another reason why I think we can say that the principle of temporary spiritual gifts is a Biblical principle is the analogy of Biblical history suggests it. Let’s go back for a moment and think about the Old Testament. You remember that when Israel was in Egypt, God came through Moses, the deliverer, and performed mighty miracles in the miracles of the plagues and in the miracle of the opening of the Red Sea and in the miracle of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire and in the miracles of the turning of bitter waters into sweet and in the opening of the Jordan by which he brought Israel into the land of Palestine or Canaan.

Now, that was an outbreak of the miraculous, which had not occurred before that time. In other words, in order to authenticate Moses as the true leader of Israel as their messiah, their deliverer, God performed through him, the mighty miracles. When Israel entered into the land, the miraculous died out. The signed gifts that Moses did, no longer were done. And for a long time, you’ll remember, no mighty signed gifts were performed in Israel. Of course, God worked for Israel, he worked for David and he did remarkable things through those who believed in him, but the outburst of the miraculous performed by a man died out. Now, if you had been an Israelite, you might have said, like many of my Pentecostal friends say today “What Moses did, we ought to do.” And you might throw snakes down or throwing rods down and trying to make them turn into snakes and all of the other things that Moses did. You might have struck the waters of the Red Sea and you might have struck the waters of the river and none of those things would have

happened because God did them through Moses. And when he had done them through Moses, it was over.

Then remember in Israel’s history, the time came when Israel had so backslidden that God spoke to them again by the miraculous. He sent the prophets to them. He raised up Elijah, who is noted for his miracles, and he was followed by Elisha. And these two men performed many mighty miracles in order that God might, again, testify to Israel this time of their disobedience through the two prophets. But, as soon as Elijah and Elisha had performed their miracles, the prophets settled down to the order prophetic ministry. And so there was no continuation of the miraculous signed gifts through the remainder of the Old Testament period. And John, the last prophet of the Old Testament, it is specifically stated of him, he did no miracle. So the signs that Elijah and Elisha did, died out.

Now, the later prophets might have said “Well, if Elisha was caught up to heaven in a chariot, why am not I? If Elijah is caught up to heaven in a chariot, why may not I do that?” Or, they may have said “If Elijah called down fire from heaven, why may not I do that?” And they may have spent all of their time out under the skies calling down fire from heaven, but no fire would have come because it was related to an historical event in God’s unfolding plan of redemption.

Then remember Jesus came and the apostles and again the miracles broke out, for God was testifying and authenticating, again, his messenger. And so, our Lord, as we read in Acts chapter 2 performed miracles, signs, and wonders. And through Paul and the apostles, he performed miracles, signs, and wonders. These were the signs of an apostle. Paul says “The signs of an apostle are wrought in your midst; they were the miraculous signed gifts, which were temporary.” And again, we believe, if you will look at Biblical history, you will see that they died out when the apostles died out. So while I say that there is no text that says there are temporary gifts, there are scriptural hints. The analogy of Biblical history demands it.



And third, I’m still in my introduction. Some of you keep looking over at the outline. [Laughter] I’m enjoying that because you’re wondering which one of those points is he talking about. I’m not talking about any of those points up there. I’m just taking this off of the top of my head. I carry around the most amazing bits of information, you know. [More laughter] I’m just trying to wake up a few of you. College students are here tonight and they are in the habit of going in the classroom and leaning on a pillow and going to sleep, you know, while a fellow talks about Kant and Kierkegaard and Bultmann and so forth.

Now, third, the nature of certain gifts demands that they be temporary. For example, an apostle, remember, well, we’re going to talk about apostles, so I will just say simply this that an apostle, by the very nature of his gift, it is to be understood that that gift is temporary. By the very nature of the gift of prophecy, it is to be understood that it is temporary. For one of the requirements of an apostle, for example, was that he should see the Lord. And Jesus Christ, is not revealing himself in his resurrection glory to people throughout this age. Now, there have been some crackpots who have said that they have seen Jesus in his glory, but they are unstable people, and they do not have any evidence of the things that they say. But so far as the apostles were concerned, they had evidence, historical evidence, of the things that had appeared to them and there were a number who had the same experience. So the very nature of certain gifts demands that they be temporary. We’ll talk about prophecy and you’ll see why that, too, must be.

And finally, this is my fourth point on this third point of my introduction. Fourth, the voice of history confirms the fact that certain of the gifts are temporary. For, while in the first century, we have the gift of healing and the gift of miracles and the gift of tongues, there is no sure evidence of speaking in tongues from the time of the apostles until the time of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century. And so all through this period of time in history, there are no sure evidences of speaking in tongues. Now, that in itself is an evidence that God intended that that gift should be temporary. But I don’t want to

anticipate myself on that because we’re going to talk about that in detail. So the voice of history confirms it. It is just as an important a voice as the voice of God when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, God signifying by that, that the Old Testament Levitical law was done away with and then in seventy a.d. destroyed the Temple that was God speaking through history. And God has spoken through history in that these temporary gifts are missing from these centuries. Now, well, I’ll just anticipate one or two objections that may be raised for that when we deal with tongues.

Professor Warfield has said something which I think may close our introduction. He says “The fundamental error underlying the whole miracle thirst is the failure to distinguish between the epoch of the creation of salvation and that of its appropriation.”

In other words, the temporary gifts were given at the time of the creation of our salvation. The days that have followed since have been the days of the appropriation of salvation and, consequently, the miraculous has faded out.

Now, let’s look at the temporary gifts. And I’m at roman I in the outline - The temporary gifts of the Spirit. And the first one that we want to deal with is the gift of apostleship. Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 11 says, Ephesians 4, verse 11 says “And then he gave some, apostles.” Now, the term apostle in the New Testament, what does it mean? It has at least three senses in the New Testament, I think. In the first place, it refers to the Twelve that we know as apostles. First Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 5 is a passage in which they are referred to in this way.

Now, the twelve had certain qualifications that they had to meet. If you were to be one of the twelve you had to be, according to Acts chapter 1, a person who had companied with our Lord Jesus Christ from the time of John the Baptist until the time of his resurrection. So you had to be with the apostles from the ministry of John the Baptist through the ministry of the Lord Jesus and then you had to see him in his resurrection if you were to be one of the twelve. That’s why those people who say that Paul should have been chosen as the twelfth apostle to take Judas’ place instead of the one who was

chosen are wrong. Paul could never have been one of the twelve because he had not accompanied with the apostles from the time of John the Baptist. So the twelve, then, is a use of the term apostle.

Second, the term apostle also refers to Paul and to James. These verses are Galatians chapter 1, verse 19 and 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 1, Ephesians 1:1, Paul calls himself an apostle. Now, these also were people who saw the Lord. That which characterized the apostleship of James and that which characterized the apostleship of Paul is that they saw the Lord in his resurrection glory. So to be an apostle like the twelve or to be an apostle like Paul or James, one had to see the Lord in his resurrection glory.

Now, that is why there are no apostles today in this sense. Now, if I were to say to Watchman Nee and some of his followers who believe that there are apostles today “There are no apostles today.” They would quickly turn me to a passage in the New Testament like Acts chapter 14, verse 14, in which Barnabas is said to be an apostle. And they think they’ve won the argument. Now, they think that, perhaps, Dr. Johnson never read that text, you know. But I’ve read that text and I’ve read two or three others too in which the word *apostolos* is used in connection with others than Paul and James and the twelve. But I would like to ask my friends, and they are my friends, I would like to ask my friends how is it that no one is ever called an apostle of Jesus Christ except one of the twelve and Paul and James, those who have seen the Lord. Those who are called apostles like Barnabas are called apostles of the churches but not apostles of Jesus Christ.

For you see, the term *apostolos* is a term that comes from the Greek word *apostello* which means to send. And so anyone who performs a task for the local church is an *apostolos*. I might say to Bob Thurman “Bob, you’re going up to Denver, Colorado, on behalf of the elders, I would like to give a message to one of the churches in Denver, Colorado, and would you mind taking it for us to that church.” And then we could call him Apostle Bob Thurman. And he would be an apostle in the sense of Barnabas. He

was a messenger of the church but not a messenger of Jesus Christ. There’s a great deal of difference. And so when Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 in verse 23 “Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you; or our brethren be enquired of, they are the.”

Now, the Authorized Version says ‘messengers of the churches’ but the Greek says apostles. “They are the apostles of the churches and the glory of Christ.” So we have apostles of the churches today, but we don’t have any apostles of Jesus Christ today. So the term apostle then is used of a person who laid the foundation of the church and the apostles have no successors. The apostles, in the sense of the twelve or in the sense of Paul and James, they have no successors because, you see, apostles had authority and they had divine authority. Paul can tell the Thessalonians “now you better do what I say.” And there is no person roving around today who can say to any group of people “now you better do what I say” and expect them to respond to their authority. There are no apostles in that sense.

Further, the apostles were the instruments of divine revelation. They were the instruments by whom we have the word of God. Do you know of any person roaming around today who is qualified by virtue of his office to be writing new scripture for us? No. There is no such person today. There are apostles of the churches, perhaps. I’ll allow them. But I won’t allow any of the other kind. There are no apostles in the sense of the apostolate of the New Testament. That is something unique. They possessed divine authority. They were agents of divine revelation. And they have given us the word of God and that word of God is now, so far as we can tell, a closed canon.

Now, if there are no apostles today and if there have been no apostles in the sense of Paul and the others since the days of the apostles then are there temporary gifts of the Spirit? Of course, the answer is obvious. Yes. There is the principle of the temporary gift. It is the apostle.

Now, what about the prophet? We move on to capital B - The prophet: the gift of prophecy. Now, we’ve talked about the prophet before. And you remember the prophets were men of inspired utterance for special situations. Agabus, we have seen in Acts chapter 11, and Acts chapter 21 and in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 20, Ephesians chapter 3, verse 5, we read of the apostles and prophets. Now, it doesn’t say prophets and apostles because we might think of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. But it says the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church. The apostles are New Testament apostles. The prophets are New Testament prophets, of course.

What were the prophets doing? Well now, the prophets were men who were agents of divine revelation, too. As a matter of fact, John the Apostle was also a prophet. He calls his Book of Revelation the prophecy, twice. So John had two gifts; the gift of apostleship and he had the gift of prophecy. And further, he also had an office. He calls himself “The Elder” in his second and third epistles. So he was a man who is to be reckoned with. He was a prophet. He gave us divine revelation. So the prophets then were men of inspired utterance for special situations.

Now, it is often said and I repeat this again because, finally, I hope it will get through to us. Today, we had something amusing happen. We have a man in my department, well all of us; it’s true of all of us. All of us have our own peculiar little views. And every now and then, we have doctor’s examinations and we get these men, these young fellows, they are unsuspecting. And we get them in for two or three hour examination, which is their final oral examination. And those poor fellows, I feel sorry for them because they’ll have an examination of three or four men and, invariably, a question will be asked in which the three men may differ in their interpretation. And then the poor fellow has to make a decision, you know, about sometimes not knowing.

But occasionally, the questions are asked by the questioners with a view to instructing the other questioner, you know. [Laughter] So today one of the men seeking,

I think, to convert me to his viewpoint asked his question, which he knew I differed with him on. But he’d had that student in his class and he thought he would give the right answer and, therefore, I might be expected to be exposed again to the other view and, hopefully, I would be converted. And so we have a lot of fun over this. We all know what we’re doing. And so he asked the question of his student and his student flubbed the answer. He couldn’t remember the answer. And I said “Well you really have taught him the truth. It’s obvious.” [More laughter] So I keep saying these things because I know they have to be said over and over again.

Now, people say about a prophet: a prophet not only told of the future, but he also gave words of exhortation and comfort. He not only foretold, but he forth told. That is, he gave out the word of God for the present as well as for the future.

That’s right. A prophet does do that. He not only spoke about the future; he spoke about the present. Look at the Old Testament prophets. They did too. Not everything that Isaiah said was something that had to do with the future. It was often grounded in the present and had a present day application to Israel when he wrote. So the prophets give two kinds of truth, they give truth pertaining to the present and they give truth pertaining to the future. But this is important. When they gave truth pertaining to the future, they were always right. They were not false prophets. They foretold the future and it came to pass. And it was one way you could test a prophet.

Now, I’ve said this about present-day prophets because, you see, there are people, my friends again and some of them are Christians, say “We have prophets today.” And so I say “Well, what are their prophecies?” And they will tell me “Well the prophecies they give are nothing more than simple little phrases from the word of God that anybody could get if he just read the Bible and quoted a text or two.” And I always say “Now, I want some of their prophecies of the future.” “Oh, well,” they say, “You know, of course, that you don’t have to prophesize concerning the future to be a prophet.” And then again, they think I’ve never studied that, you know. And so I say “Yes, I know that but the

“true” prophets also prophesied of the future. And that was the way we could test them. Now, I want a few of your prophecies of the future so that I can see if these prophets that you’ve been listening to are true prophets.” And they never give me any. They never give me any because the present-day prophets which are in existence among my Christian friends’ churches, they only prophesize about present things. They never prophesy of the future. They never get out on a limb, so you can test them. And if they ever do then the limb is cut off because their prophecies do not come true.

Now, Jeane Dixon and Maurice Woodruff and prophets like that; we don’t have to have much discernment to see that they don’t belong. But I wish that some of my friends who said that prophets do exist in the Christian churches today would give us some of their prophecies so we could test them. But they won’t do it. You see, the reason is that the prophets gave inspired utterances. And we have no people today giving “inspired” utterances. Now, if there are no people today giving inspired utterances then are there temporary gifts? Why, of course, there are temporary gifts. Are there prophets today who could write something that would have the authority of the word of God? Come on, if you’re a prophet give me something with the authority of the word of God that is not in the word of God. And give me something about the future so we can test you; see whether you are genuine or whether you are just a false prophet. Well you know the answer to that. It’s ridiculous to argue the point.

Capitol C - The gifts of wisdom and knowledge. The gifts of wisdom and knowledge, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 8, Paul says “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.” Now, little is known of these gifts and I don’t want to pose as if I know everything. I hope you’re not getting that impression tonight. I’m really kidding you a little bit, you know, when I say some of these things. I don’t know much about the gift of wisdom and knowledge because, you see, as far as I can tell, there are just a couple of passages in the Bible that refer to these gifts, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

What were the gifts of wisdom and knowledge? They are associated with other temporary gifts. Well I’m inclined to think they were these. They were gifts that were given to individuals in local churches by which they had special understanding of the doctrines and truth of the word of God and were able, in the meetings of the church, to instruct the saints before they had the Scriptures completed. For example, in the church at Corinth, to which Paul ministered, they didn’t have the epistles that Paul wrote in the prison in Rome, for that had not come to pass yet. So how could they know the truth of the body of Christ as taught in the Epistle to the Ephesians? How could they know those truths? Well the only way they could know them was for God to give spiritual gifts to certain men of unusual understanding of divine truths. And in the meetings of the church, which were free and open for the men to participate; those who had the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, one the theoretical and one the practical. These men were able to instruct the church and give them truth that could be relied upon as divine truth before they had the whole of the word of God.

You know, a church would have had to, without these gifts, to be a very one-sided kind of church if it only had certain ones of the books of the New Testament. And it was not until the middle of the second century before even our Gospels came to be collected together as the fourfold gospel canon. So the gifts of wisdom and knowledge were, I think, temporary; passed out when we had the word of God. We don’t need any more wisdom than this. We don’t need any more knowledge than this. All we need now is a teacher to instruct us in this, and we have the permanent gift of teaching.

Capital D - The gift of discerning of spirits. Again, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 10. There is little said in the Bible about the gift of the discerning of spirits. I think that this gift had to do with the discernment of the utterances that were made in the local church; and it, too, died out when the word of God became well known and possessed by members of the churches.



Capital E - The gift of miracles, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 10, Paul says “to another the working of miracles.” Now, miracles were generally performed in attestation of apostleship and of the apostolic message. And I want you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12 so you can see it with your two little eyes, 2 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 12. Now, notice what Paul says 1 Corinthians 12:12. Did I say first? You see that proves I am not a true prophet. [Laughter] Second Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12 “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” “The signs of an apostle.” The miracles were the signs of an apostle.

Now, modern miracle workers, well they don’t act like the apostles. Paul was able to look at a man just like I’m looking at Jack Smythe here, and suddenly Elymas the sorcerer is blind. He was able to look him blind. Now, when I look at him I want to go blind. [Laughter] He was able to perform a miracle like that.

Now, who are there today who are able to look at people and look them blind? There are no such people today. Modern miracle workers pick and choose among the people. They call people forward and then they say “You are healed.” And then when they are not healed they say “Well, too bad, you didn’t have faith. That’s dishonest in my opinion.

And further, the final test is the resurrection. There was Peter; he raised Dorcas from the dead. There was Paul, he raised Euticus from the dead. They had the gift of miracles. But where are people today raising others from the dead? Well all they’re doing is curing them of some psychosomatic disease, which they had, often, and they call that a miracle. That’s not a Biblical miracle.

That brings us to F - The gift of healing which is an aspect of that. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 9 “To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. Now, I would like to say this with regard to the gift of healing. It’s natural for the human heart to desire healing. Who would not want healing?

I wish that I didn’t have the sore throat that I have now. And there are many serious diseases, which, perhaps, we know that we have or that we are in danger of acquiring and we would love to have healing. It’s natural, also, to go to God for healing because he calls himself in the Bible, Jehovahratha, the Lord, Thy God, that healeth the. So I have a great deal of sympathy for people who are interested in healing. The fact of human suffering is enough to give any of us sympathy for people who need healing.

Now, I think, if we think about human suffering we will finally come to the conclusion that the ultimate cause of human suffering is sin. In the final analysis, the reason that my throat is in a bad shape tonight is because Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and I was born with the sin nature and one of these days, if Jesus Christ does not come, I am going to die. D-I-E. Not pass away. Not go away. I am going to die. D-I-E.

And when my body is laid out and there is no spirit any longer in it, you can stand over my body and you have my permission to do this: As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men because all have sinned. And he partook of the sin nature and he has died. Now, that’s God speaking, he says we die.

Now, the reason any kind of sickness that I have, the cold that I have is a reflection of that, it seems to me, ultimately. Everything that we have is related to that and we fight a losing battle. And not only do we fight a losing battle, we call in doctors who themselves are fighting a losing battle too, and they all die, all of them. And so you see, the ultimate cause of our sickness is sin.

Now, the proximate causes are, well we may, of course, get it directly from Adam because he is our father. We may voluntarily undertake suffering that may produce sickness. Paul speaks about the sufferings for Christ, which he underwent voluntarily because he wanted to serve the Lord. There are some that are educative. God passes us through some experiences in order that we may grow spiritual through them. They have not come because of any specific sin but in order that we may grow by them. And that is

what Peter speaks about in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 6 and 7. Some of them are corrective. God brings us into some experiences in order that we will see that we have sinned specifically against him, and we are disciplined. So, human suffering comes, ultimately, from sin but proximately from many different causes. The basis of divine healing is in the atonement of course. And, ultimately, the healing that we shall have in the resurrection is related precisely to what Jesus Christ did on the Cross. The reason we shall have a resurrection body someday is because Jesus Christ died on the Cross and took away our sin. Now, when you study divine healing in the New Testament you will discover that it sometimes took place without faith on the part of those who were healed, sometimes, with faith.

Now, when we look at modern healing movement, as I said, they always insist that faith is necessary. But if you look at the New Testament, that is not true.

More often than not, no faith is ever referred to by those who are the subject of the healings of the New Testament. They were men who had the gift of healing; the gift of performing that mighty miracle and they performed it upon people, so far as we know, who did not have faith as well as those who did. And they did not take up any collections when they healed, either.

Now, the purposes of divine healing. Why did Paul perform healings? Well, he performed healings in order that he might authenticate the new age. This, for the same reason that the other miracles were performed. And what were the results? Well the healings were miraculous. They were immediate. They were complete and all who were the object of the work of the healer were healed. Today, we don’t have any of that. We have all kinds of ridiculous claims.

A few years ago in Florida, Oral Roberts went there for some meetings, this is about fifteen years ago, now. He went there for some meetings and when he appeared in St. Petersburg, the Church of Christ ran a large ad in the daily paper. They offered “One thousand dollars for acceptable evidence of one case of miraculous divine healing of

cancer, tuberculosis, withered limbs or paralysis. Certified testimony of any three reputable physicians, members of the Pinellas Medical Society, will be accepted as sufficient evidence.” The thousand dollars went unclaimed. Now, that was a reasonable kind of request, but it went unclaimed. Christian Science has spread fast propaganda to the effect that healings take place in their cult. About the year 1900, according to one report, the Massachusetts Medical Society posted a bond with the First National Bank in Boston offering the sum of ten thousand dollars for medical proof of an organic healing through Christian Science. That offer was never taken up.

Now, I made that statement once and I had it on second hand authority in a book, written by a friend that I respected. And I made that statement and one of my students came up and said “Where did you get the documentation for that?” And I told him all I had. And I reported just what I had said and said that “It came from this.” And so he decided he would write the Massachusetts Medical Society about this. Now that was seventy years ago. This was about ten years ago, so it was about sixty years later. And he wrote the Massachusetts Medical Society, and I have a copy of the letter which was written. I thought some of you might enjoy it, some of you may be doctors and you would enjoy it. “Dear Mr. So and So” this was my student, “I regret that we do not have ten thousand available to anyone who can produce medical proof of healing accomplished by Christian Science.” You probably, even if this was not true, he didn’t know about it because this was sixty years later. But, he said, “I may add that it is a silly offer to make since healing occurs not infrequently as a result of 1. No treatment at all. 2. Medical treatment. 3. Anything you please. [Laughter] Now, this was interesting, this next statement because he’s the secretary of the Massachusetts Medical Society. And he said “As a matter of fact,” this is for you who are under the care of doctors. [laughter] “As a matter of fact, people get well in spite of treatment just as often as they do because of it.” [More laughter]

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse said that in one day, in his early ministry, he had a businessman come to him who believed the doctrines of healing and who wanted him to incorporate these doctrines in his preaching. And he said to Dr. Barnhouse what people have often said to me. “Oh, Dr. Johnson, if you could just add to your ministry preaching regarding the signed gifts and speaking in tongues, you’d just be a full preacher.” And this man said that he felt Dr. Barnhouse ought to add these things to his ministry; preach divine healing. And Dr. Barnhouse said “I looked across the table at him and I said ‘Do you believe in divine healing?’” And he said he did. And then Dr. Barnhouse said, “I’ll preach divine healing when you really believe in it.” He said, “Oh, I really believe in it.” Dr. Barnhouse said, “No, you don’t.” He said, “I pointed out to him that he was wearing glasses, that he had a gold tooth, and that there were wrinkles on his face and hands which showed his age and that his hair was white and it was falling out.” And he said, the man who was talking to him said, “Oh but six years ago my kidney.” And Dr. Barnhouse said, “I stopped him short. I said, if your divine healing does not affect your teeth, your eyes, your skin, your hair; I don’t want anything of it.” And of course, he was right.

When God healed in the Bible it was an immediate and perfect healing. Do you remember Naaman? He had leprosy. And when Naaman was healed by going down into the Jordan, his skin came out, do you remember what the Bible says? His skin was like a baby’s skin, like a baby’s skin. He didn’t stagger out of the water with splotches and blotches all over his skin.

I was in a healing meeting with Katherine Kuhlman and there were people brought up on the platform. And I was there. I was very interested. I was writing all kinds of notes. I’m passing on some to you now. And one fellow came up and he staggered up with his crutches and he got up on the platform just about this high. And she was there and she put her hands upon his head and she prayed. And there were some men standing around. One man was standing right over there. There were steps

down like this except that it was right in the center and he was standing about right there. And this fellow was pronounced healed. And his crutches were taken by one of the men standing by, and he started to stagger down those steps. [Laughter] And I was like this because I knew he was going to fall flat on his face. And sure enough, if it hadn’t been for a big strong man who grabbed him right here, he would have fallen flat on his face.

Now, that’s the kind of healing that is performed in healing meetings. But that kind of healing is not Biblical healing. Why that man, if he had been healed by Paul, he would have leaped four feet in the air and jumped the floor and raced out of the building. That’s the difference between Biblical healings and the healings we have today.

Oral Roberts went to Amarillo, I’ve got the clipping here. He went to Amarillo, September 11, 1950. Fifty injured at Amarillo as revival tent collapses. [Laughter] “Fifty persons were injured, two of them critically, when a huge tent used for a revival collapsed during the height of a thunderstorm last night. The tent was being used by Reverend Oral Roberts, Tulsa, Oklahoma, who advertised that he had been given the power to heal many sick and crippled persons.”

Now, listen it’s positively dangerous to go to a healing meeting. [More laughter] “Only three nights ago, during a service similar to that last night, the tent came lose at one corner during a small wind storm and one man died of a heart attack as he rushed to get outside.” Now, that’s pitiful. That’s pitiful that people could be so deceived to go to a meeting like that. And that poor soul who went looking for healing, perhaps, left, if he was a Christian in the presence of the Lord that may have been good, but I don’t think I want to go to meetings like that. I don’t want that kind of healing.

What then about the biblical passages? Well, I’m just going to say my time. I had a lot to say tonight. There were psychosomatic cures. Why, doctors can tell you, that people who come to their offices. Oh, I did mean to say one thing else. Do you know, in the Bible, miracles are often associated with the cleansing of the lepers? And you know, it’s a striking thing, Dr. Eugene Kellersberger, who was one of the greatest

missionaries to the lepers who ever lived. Dr. Kellersberger was asked if any healers ever came out to heal the lepers. And he said, to his knowledge, over decades of service of the Lord among the lepers of the world “No healer ever came to the lepers to try to cleanse the lepers.” That’s something you cannot do by their methods.

There are psychosomatic cures. Did you know that it is possible for a woman to think that she is pregnant, and not only to think that she is pregnant but to actually to swell up with the obesity that characterizes it when there is no child at all? Now, the technical name for that, for those of you who are not medical men, is pseudocyesis. It is also characteristic of animals. And the most amazing things have taken place in the case of suggestible people.

In Johns Hopkins Hospital, a suggestible woman, they are not all women either. But a suggestible woman was given a test. The doctors, in order to test the power of her mind over her body, rubbed a towel briskly upon one arm and then placed a block of ice on it, examining at the same time her other arm and speaking in a voice which she could hear which was meant for her though they addressed each other, and they said, ‘do you think the blister will appear here?’ Rubbing once more on the left arm and looking at the right arm until, finally, a blister appeared on the right arm caused entirely by the woman.

Now, in view of cases like this which we believe exist by the tens of thousands in our hypochondriac population, much of the healing that takes place, I believe, in Christian Science healings, Roman Catholic pilgrimages, and Protestant healing campaigns is nothing more than a psychosomatic healing.

After all, if a person imagines he’s sick, he can imagine he’s well and immediately cured by the glory of the Virgin Mary or Mary Baker Eddy or the divine healer. Then there are some that are neurotic people. And, I think, the climax of it all was a few years ago in the South, there was a person who was traveling around healing people. And he was doing the same thing in city after city. And, finally, the newspapers exposed this healer because the photographs that they gathered from each of the newspapers

demonstrated that the same man complete with bandages and crutches was healed in half a dozen different cities, throwing away his crutches with a cry of triumph. And always, so my information says, just before the offering was taken. So these healings are psychosomatic. They are frauds. They are satanic delusions. I do not believe that biblical healings are taking place today.

Now, people come and say, “But are not people being healed?” Of course they’re being healed because sometimes it’s the will of God that a person be healed. And he can heal. And so I am sure that many miraculous healings have taken place. I believe that divine healing exists. I just do not believe that there are divine healers today. And when you look at the Bible you will see that if you want healing, the Bible says you are to call for the elders of the church and they are to come and they are to anoint you with oil and they are to pray over you. Divine healers never do that. They always invite you to come to them. And it’s not the elders of the church. It’s some person who’s traveling around the country performing these in meetings with suggestible people who gather and are given false assurance and ultimately are damaged so far as the Christian faith is concerned.

Next week, the Lord willing, we will take up the gift of tongues. Let’s bow in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the apostles who have given us Holy Scripture, a New Testament by which we may test the false interpretations that are often offered by men. Deliver us, Lord, from the things that are contrary to the Scriptures. Enable us to be subject to them. Enable us, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to glorify Thee in subjection to Thy word. Now, we commit each one present to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon them. May they use their own spiritual gift to the glory of God and to the blessing of the church of Jesus Christ.



“The Temporary Gifts (the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Gifts)” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.