

**HEBRON EVANGELICAL CHURCH
CHURCH DOCTRINE & PRACTICE:**

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT



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4, 11 & 18 January 2012

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Hebron Evangelical Church

Church Doctrine and Practice: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

PREAMBLE

‘Things travel in circles.’

As far as I am aware that is not a verse from the Bible! However, observation of life seems to back this saying. As a teacher in secondary level education, it never ceased to amaze me how leading educationalists would deride current practice, introduce new methods and then, five years later, criticise these strategies, advocating a return to the very programmes abandoned in the earlier round.

The discussion in regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, along with one or two other ‘controversies’, seems to follow a similar cycle. Certainly in my 43 years as a Christian, I have gone through these discussions on at least four separate occasions.

I use the word ‘controversy’ advisedly but, I think, correctly. Paul urges us all to “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (1 **Corinthians 12:31**). Yet, assemblies, fellowships and churches have split over this issue. Some have lost their witness in the area altogether and shut down. Christian folk have been hurt and nothing about these situations has brought glory to God.

Ask yourself – why?

Back in 2010, we commenced studies into the larger area of Church Doctrine and Practice. In other words: ‘this is what we understand the Bible to teach in regards to fellowship life, and this is how we put it into practice here at Hebron’.

Personally I was thrilled to see that the first of these sessions was on the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. That was wholly correct. The Bible is “God-breathed” and “is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in

righteousness,” (2 *Timothy* 3:16). Why is that important? “ So that the man of God may be ***thoroughly equipped*** for every good work.” (2 *Timothy* 3:17, *my emphasis*). So, in investigating the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I am resorting to the Bible for my direction.

Whenever we make recourse to the Word of God we should do so in prayer. We must seek the moving of God’s Holy Spirit. We need to clear ourselves of ***ANY AND ALL*** preconceptions, thus revisiting the Scriptures afresh and leaving ourselves open to God’s leading. We must consider ***ALL*** the relevant passages of Scripture. This is no easy task; however, we cannot ‘cherry-pick’ the verses that favour our particular point of view. I would again commend to you the examples of the Bereans:

“ . . . they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Acts 17:11

God is perfect, complete and holy. He will not contradict Himself. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead – the Spirit is God! So anything ‘of the Spirit’ will not contradict Scripture. Likewise, the Bible, as the Word of God, does not contradict itself. It follows, therefore, that if a practice contradicts Scripture, it is not of God!

I propose the following steps in this study:

Firstly, I think it will be helpful to define what is meant by the various words used.

Secondly, we turn to Scripture. It is suggested that there exists in the New Testament four main passages relating specifically to the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

***Romans 12,
1 Corinthians 12-14,
Ephesians 4,***



and **1 Peter 4.**

As we have the time, I propose to read and review **EACH** of these passages and, in doing so, seek to identify any common, recurring themes. As a result we will identify what the gifts of the Holy Spirit actually are. It is appropriate to then look at what the Lord Jesus himself said about the empowering of the Holy Spirit and how it took effect in the church.

Thirdly, we will look at the ‘permanency’ of all/some of the gifts. In other words, ‘are all the gifts of the Holy Spirit still available today?’

Fourthly, we need to understand why the promotion and practice of such gifts has become such an area of controversy. Consequently, we will look at how we can recognise whether a manifested gift is ‘of the Holy Spirit’.

As we progress through this study, I will be stating what the Elders of the fellowship instruct to be the practice in regards to the open use gifts of the Holy Spirit at Hebron, **AND** proffering advice for the private application of gifts of the Holy Spirit by believers. There will be opportunity at the House Group discussion to review this as a fellowship. It is the intention of the Elders to meet following the House Group and consider any issues that are raised. If necessary, a definitive statement may then be given.

Yates' Field

During the Depression of the 1920's, Ira Yates bought a field, 'west of the Pecos'. He borrowed some governmental funding to make the purchase, together with a mortgage arrangement. It soon became apparent that the 'ranch' was not producing enough income for Ira and his wife, Ann, to pay either the capital or the interest on the loans. They were in very real danger of losing the ranch.

A seismograph crew from an oil company came into the area and told Ira that there could be oil on his land. They sought, and received, his permission to drill a 'wildcat' well.

At 1,115feet, they struck a huge reserve of oil. The first established well produced 80,000 barrels of oil per day. More wells were drilled on the land and were even bigger. Most of them produced 125,000 barrels of oil per day. To date, more than one billion barrels of oil have been produced. It is anticipated that there is a further one billion barrels of oil to come! Yates' Field became Yates' Pool!

Under the lease agreement, Ira owned it all! From the moment he took possession of the field, he had owned all the oil and mineral rights to the plot. Yet he and Ann had been living in poverty. The issue was that they did not know that the oil was there. They owned it, but did not know it!

Many Christians live a lot like Ira and Ann.

They are truly saved. They have accepted the gift of salvation. They look forward to spending an eternity with Christ. However, they are living a life of spiritual poverty. They have God's Holy Spirit, they just don't know it. They don't realise that they are sitting on a pool of the greatest resource ever imagined – the power of the resurrection at work in them. It is available to them if they will only tap in to this great reserve, a

reserve that will never - ever - run out!

Then His Church becomes a healthy, wholesome body, as He intended it to be.

Jesus said:

*“ . . . I have come that they may have life, and
have it to the full.”*

John 10:10

It is my earnest hope and prayer that, as you work through this study, you will discover the fullness of God’s Holy Spirit for you and then be enabled to have life to the full, that is to live your earthly life in the power of Christ’s resurrection.



A Selected Glossary of Terms

GIFTS (5922): χάρισμα – charisma

‘A Spiritual endowment or benefit, a miraculous endowment.’ (Strong’s)

‘A gift on the part of God as donor . . . of His endowment upon believers by the operation of the Holy Spirit’ (Vine)

Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Corinthians 12:30; 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Note: The word ‘gift’ as appears in the NIV in the following verses does not appear in the original Greek texts: *1 Corinthians 12:1; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Corinthians 14:12.*

SPIRITUAL (4461): πνευματικός – pneumatikos

‘Pertaining to the Spirit.’ (Strongest)

‘Always connotes the ideas of invisibility and power. It does not appear in the Gospels . . . it is in fact an after-Pentecost word. [The believers] appointed activities in the churches are also called spiritual.’ (Vine)

Romans 12:11; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Corinthians 14:12.

PROPHESYING (4735/4736)

Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 14:24.

PROPHET(S) (4737)

Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 12:29; 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Corinthians 14:32; 1 Corinthians 14:37.

PROPHECY (4735)

1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 13:2; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Corinthians 14:6; 1 Corinthians 14:22.

PROPHECIES (4735)

1 Corinthians 13:8.

PROPHECIES (4736)

1 Corinthians 14:3; 1 Corinthians 14:4; 1 Corinthians 14:5.

PROPHECY (4736)

1 Corinthians 13:9; 1 Corinthians 14:5; 1 Corinthians 14:31; 1 Corinthians 14:39.

4735: προφητεία - propheteia: ‘An inspired message, sometimes encouraging obedience to God. Sometimes proclaiming the future as a warning to preparedness and continued obedience.’ (Strongest)

4736: προφητεύω – propheteuo: ‘To speak and inspired message.’ (Strongest)

4737: προφήτης – prophetikos: ‘One who speaks inspired utterances; the writings of the OT prophets.’

APOSTLES (693): απόστολος – apostolos: ‘Apostle, representative, messenger, envoy; often used in a technical sense for the divinely appointed founders of the church.’ (Strongest)

1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 12:29; Ephesians 4:11.

TONGUE(S) (1185): γλώσσα – glossa: ‘Language; sometimes refers to the supernatural gift of tongues.’ (Strongest)

‘The supernatural gift of speaking in another language without its having been learnt;’ (Vine)

‘A language,’ (Strong’s)

All occurrences in the New Testament, except: *James 3:9* (899) when referring to the tongue in the mouth; and *1 Corinthians 14:21* (2280) when referring specifically to foreign languages (heteroglossos).

Note: In *2 Corinthians 12* Paul tells of ‘man’ who heard inexpressible (777: ἀρρητοζ – arrhetos) things **v4**. Vine suggests, following the works of Moulton and Milligan, this refers to happenings and/or words “too sacred to be uttered.” Strongest suggests similarly that this refers to “things or words too sacred to tell.”

INTERPRET(S) (1450)

1 Corinthians 12:30; 1 Corinthians 14:5; 1 Corinthians 14:13; 1 Corinthians 14:27.

INTEPRETATION (2255)

1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 14:26.

INTERPRETER (1449)

1 Corinthians 14:28.

1450: διερμηνεύω – diermeneuo: ‘To interpret, translate, explain. Explain what is said.’ (Strongest)

1449: διερμηνευτήζ – diermeneutes: ‘Interpreter, translator.’ (Strongest)

2255: ἑρμηνεία – hermeneia: ‘Interpretation, translation, to translate meaning from one language to another. In NT a gift of the Spirit necessary for understanding the gift of tongues in assembly.’ (Strongest)



The Gifts of the Spirit Listed in the New Testament Letters:			
Romans 12	1 Corinthians 12/13/4	Ephesians 4	1 Peter 4
	Administration		Serves
	Apostles (x2)	Apostles	Speaks/ Serves
Contributing			Serves
	Distinguishing		Serves
Encouraging			Speaks
		Evangelists	Speaks
	Faith		Serves
	Healing (x3)		Serves
	Interpreting (x2)		Speaks/ Serves
	Knowledge		Speaks
Leadership			Serves
	Miraculous Powers		Serves
		Pastors	Serves
Prophecy	Prophecy (x3)	Prophets	Speaks
Serving	Help		Serves
Showing Mercy			Serves
	Tongues (x3)		Speaks
Teaching	Teachers (x2)	Teachers	Speaks
	Wisdom		Speaks

What Does the Bible Tell Us?

Readings: **Romans 12:1-21;**
 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40;
 Ephesians 4:1-32;
and **1 Peter 4:1-19.**

Let's read **1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40** first of all.

Note the opening phrase of this passage: "Now about spiritual gifts," Look at **1 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Corinthians 8:1;** and **1 Corinthians 15:1.** It is clear that Paul is writing a reply to a previously received letter from the church at Corinth. He is addressing points raised in that correspondence. This is the context in which we should approach the three chapters we have read together.

What is your favourite film? If you were asked, could you give a brief outline of the film's storyline? How much more should we be able to give an outline of our favourite book – the Bible! Let us see if we can, together, compose an overview of these three chapters:

12:1-3:

12:4-6:

12:7-11:

12:12-31a:

12:31b-13:13:

14:1-14:12:

14:13-14:25:

14:26-35:

14:36-40:

If we have time in the first session, we will split into three groups. In your groups, agree an outline or overview of the reading assigned to your group, either: **Romans 12:1-21; Ephesians 4:1-32; or 1 Peter 4:1-19.**

Be prepared to share your overview. Can we identify any similarities between the overviews?

If we don't have time, then this is homework, yes - homework! Do the same exercise for yourself on each of the three other readings.

My attempts at this are on the following pages. Don't look!

An Outline Analysis of the New Testament Passage

Romans 12:1-21

1 Corinthians 12-14

Verses 1-2:

Be spiritual, not like you use to be. It is what God wants.

12:1-11:

Don't be like you use to be. We all have spiritual gifts from the one Spirit.

Verses 3-8:

You are part of the body - all equally important. Use your gifts as part of the body.

12:12-31a:

We are all part of one body, all equally important.

Verses 9-21:

Love the body!

12:31b-13:13:

Get your priorities right - love! Love is greater than the gifts.

14:1-39:

Go for the gifts! However use them to edify and build up the church. Don't be like you use to be. Do everything in God's order.

Dealing with the Practice of the Gifts of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-16

1 Peter 4:1-11

Verses 1-6:

Love the body, keep it unified - through the Spirit.

Verses 1-6:

Suffering happens in the body. You are not like you use to be.

Verses 7-13:

We have been given gifts which we are to use to build up the church.

Verses 7-11:

The end is near. So - love! Use your gifts to serve and to direct praise to God.

Verse 14-16:

Don't be like you use to be. Work together in the body.

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What Jesus Said About the Spirit

The Lord Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit at length throughout His discourse to the disciples at the ‘Last Supper’. We can read this in John’s Gospel and chapters 13 to 17.

Hopefully we have realised now (if we hadn’t before) that it is useful to read the whole passage to place things into proper context. Do find time to do this at home.

The relevant passages for us are: **John 14:14-21; John 14:25-27; John 15:26-27; John 16:5-15; and John 17:20-21a.**

Jesus also refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit in His final words to the disciples: **Acts 1:4-9.**

Let’s take the time to read these specific passages.

As you read what the Lord has to say, do His words in anyway compare with the passages we have studied in relation to the gifts?

When you read the all five chapters, note the Lord’s words in **John 13:34-35:**

“A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

and **John 15:12:**

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

Ring any bells?

For me, the most amazing statement that Jesus makes about the Spirit is found in **John 16:5-7:**

“Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these

things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your own good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

In other words Jesus is saying ‘It is better to have the Spirit in you than to have me with you’!

The Effect of the Spirit: The Disciples

Having received such a promise directly from the Lord, I would like to think that I would have been 100% committed to the cause from that point on. However, I suspect that my reaction would be exactly that of the disciples. They hid themselves away following Christ’s crucifixion. They were scared, fearing what would happen to them. No doubt some, if not all, were making plans to return to former occupations.

Thomas, known throughout history as ‘doubting Thomas’, is a case in point. Even though he was a recipient of the Lord’s promise at the ‘Last Super’, even though his fellows assured him that they had seen the resurrected Christ, he would not believe them:

“Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and out my hand into His side, I will not believe it.”

John 20:25b

Then, even when he was afforded this opportunity, and having witnessed the Lord ascend, he, together with the other disciples, hid away in an upstairs room. (**Acts 1:13**)

Yet just 4 verses later the Holy Spirit came upon them, including Thomas. Observe the transformation (**Acts 1:14**): the disciples stood up before the massed crowds and presented themselves as followers of Christ - with power! You can do a similar analyse of the change in Peter, surely Christ's most fervent follower - in his own eyes before and certainly after the coming of the Spirit.

The Effect of the Spirit: The Church

Throughout the book of **Acts**, essentially a well researched history book (the only one of it's sort in the New Testament), we can read of 'miraculous signs and wonders': **Acts 2:43**; **Acts 5:12**; **Acts 6:8**; **Acts 8:6**; **Acts 14:3**.

Acts 4:23-30 details a powerful prayer that the Apostles and their 'people' prayed. After they prayed, **verse 31**:

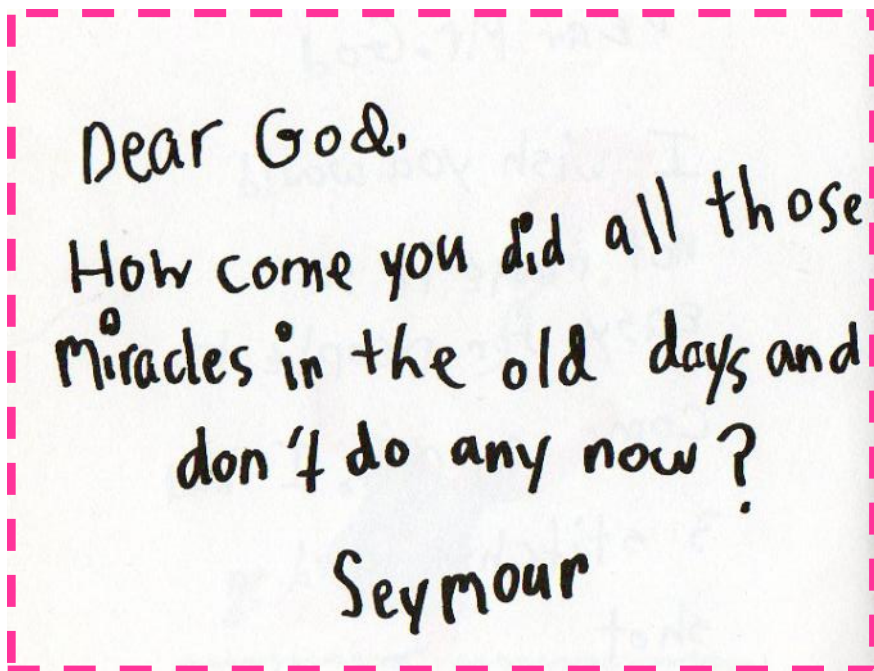
“the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

I don't know about you, but I for one would love to see that happen at Hebron again and again!

As well as the Pentecost account in **Acts 2**, we can read of the speaking in tongues in **Acts 10** (Cornelius's house) and **Acts 19** (the Ephesians disciples of John).

It is sometimes pointed out that you never read of the practice of any of the 'sign gifts' after this. This is not a valid point, in my opinion. Of course you do not hear of this practice in the Bible. Acts is the **ONLY** history book giving an account of what happened! This argument is disingenuous to say the least.

So - Are the Gifts of the Spirit Available today?



From 'Children's Letters to God', Hample & Marshall, 1991.

I apologise for this but we do need to understand what is being asked by this question. If we refer back to the 'list' of gifts gathered from the four letters on page 11, ask this question:

'Do we still have [insert the gift here] today?

So, do we still have 'contributors' who give generously? Do we still have administrators? Do we still have teachers? The obvious answer to most of those listed is: yes!

Clearly the question needs to be qualified. Some distinguish, quite rightly between the 'serving' or ministry gifts: prophecy (the forth telling rather than the foretelling); serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, administration, etcetera; and the so-called 'sign' gifts: tongues, interpretation, prophecy (foretelling), wisdom, knowledge, healing and miracles.

So, rightly put, our question should read: ‘Are the sign gifts of the Spirit available today?’

Let’s return to **1 Corinthians 13**, and in particular **verse 8-12**:

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

This passage in particular has been quoted for some 125 years as the authority for teaching that the sign gifts ceased to become available once the Bible as we know it came into being. It is suggested that “**when perfection comes**” refers to the completion of the Bible as we know it today.

The Elders at Hebron do not subscribe to that view and do not believe that it, in itself, disqualifies the use of sign gifts after the completion of the Scriptures.

Equally it has been argued that, as the sign gifts largely disappeared after the first century, they are no longer available today.

Again the Elders at Hebron do not subscribe to this view. Historical accounts on the history of the church do not back up this claim. Even if it was the case, let us not forget that until the Reformation (16th century) the Christian church did not teach that salvation is through faith alone. We certainly don’t hold to that today!

There are numerous accounts over the history of the church where the sign gifts have been used validly and of God and

have affirmed the reality of the message and the veracity of the messenger.

So, in answer to the question, “Are the sign gifts of the Spirit available today?”, the answer (as far as the Elders at Hebron are concerned) is that there is nothing in Scripture that states this is not the case.

It has to be agreed that the use of the ‘sign’ gifts is not the norm for the church today. That the Lord, for example, heals today in answer to the faithful prayers of His people and in accordance with His will is unquestioned. That not all are healed is also evident. (See **2 Corinthians 12**, where Paul writes about his ‘thorn in the flesh’.)

So Why is There Such Controversy?

There has, undoubtedly been incorrect and confused teaching, and therefore, practice on the gifts of the Spirit in both charismatic (so-called) and non-charismatic churches.

It has been taught that the Baptism of the Spirit can happen again and again in a believers earthly life. This is confused teaching. The Bible clearly teaches that when a believer accepts Christ as her/his Saviour, AT THAT POINT IN TIME the believer is baptised (totally immersed) in the Spirit and is:

placed into the body of Christ, **1 Corinthians 12:13**;
born again of the Spirit, **John 3:5-8**;
indwelt by the Holy Spirit, **1 Corinthians 6:19**;
sealed by the Spirit as belonging to God, **Ephesians 1:13-14**.

However, once saved, all believers are exhorted to be FILLED with the Spirit, that is to submit to the control and direction of the Spirit. It is this ‘filling’ of the Spirit that is the power to live for and witness of Christ. **Ephesians 5:18**; **Acts 4:31** (quoted on page 20); **Acts 6:3**; to quote but a few! Keep on being filled!

It has been taught that unless the believer ‘speaks in tongues’ they have not been baptised in the Spirit, and therefore are not yet saved. This teaching is horrifically wrong and is one of the reasons why there has been so much hurt in assemblies of Christian believers. This is especially so when genuine believers are made to feel that they are ‘second class’ Christians and not really up to the standard required.

We return to **1 Corinthians 12** which clearly states that not all speak in tongues. We all have the one Spirit. We all have at least one gift of the Spirit given to us. In all likelihood we each have more than one gift, a portfolio of gifts, if you will.

The real problem with the gifts of the Spirit is that they can **ALL** be faked! We have to be so careful when the gifts are practiced. This is why, quite legitimately, some are concerned about the gifts being practiced.

Even back in Moses' day, some of the signs and wonders carried out through Aaron and Moses were copied by Pharaoh's ‘wise men and sorcerers’. (**Exodus 7:8-24**).

Acts 8:9-25 gives an account of Simon, a man who practiced sorcery that amazed the people. **Acts 13:4-12** tells of Elymas Bar-Jesus, who Paul described as “a child of the devil full of all kinds of deceit and trickery.” (**verse 10**).

In one of their study booklets, Radio Bible Class quote a former Mormon:

“When I was a Mormon, I used to speak in tongues. I thought I was receiving revelations from God. Now I have received Christ as my Saviour, I am convinced that these experiences did not come from God. I think that they may have come from the devil or demons.”

What About Speaking in Tongues, Mart R de Haan II, 2001

Many in occult practices, Eastern Mysticism, the New Age movement, Haitian Voodoo followers and certain Hindu sects

exhibit some of the more spectacular sign gifts.

So how can we be sure? At the beginning of our study together, we agreed that God speaks to man through His Word. C Ernest Tatham writes:

“The Word of God provides the tracks for the train; the Spirit puts steam into the cylinders. Spiritual balance calls for both sound doctrine and vital experience. If experience is over-emphasised, there is a danger of blowing up; if doctrine is over-emphasised, there is a danger of drying up. . . . The Spirit of God never leads contrary to the Word of God.”

‘Let the Tide Come In, 1976.

When it is possible we must ‘test the spirits’. If what is done is clearly not in accord with what the Scriptures teach, it can not be of the Holy Spirit.

Those who deal with those critically afflicted by the enemy ‘test the spirits’. **1 John 4:1-3** teaches:

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

Reference also **1 Corinthians 12:3** and **2 John 7-11**.

A valid point is made in reference to the **FRUITS** of the Spirit, **Galatians 5:22-23**. Whilst the gifts certainly can be faked, the fruits can not!

Let us never ever forget that we are encouraged to utilise the full power of the Spirit in our lives, to

“eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”

1 Corinthians 14:1.

Further we are entreated:

“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Also, **1 Corinthians 14:39:**

Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

It has been suggested that **1 Corinthians 14:2** speaks of the private manifestation of tongues. Certainly this is what happened in the upper room of **Acts 2**, Cornelius’s house in **Acts 10** and in Ephesus in **Acts 14**. In **Romans 8:26-27** we read, (in relation to suffering):

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

Some have suggested that this manifestation is available to all to use in private worship, perhaps only once in the Christians experience, perhaps on a number of occasions. Perhaps this is what Paul was referring to in **1 Corinthians 14:18**? In **Romans**, Paul seems to indicate that this is not something that can be turned off and on at will. When we are at our wits end, the Spirit takes over. Personally I do not see this as the same thing as the gift of ‘speaking in tongues’. However, if this comes your way, embrace it - **ALWAYS REMEMBERING TO TEST THE SPIRITS!** Take care, and look after yourself!

Finally

The Elders do not take the position that this topic is a test of fellowship for those whose teaching differs on this area. They do expect that **“everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way”**, (1 Corinthians 14:40).

There are certain foundational truths that are non-negotiable, those things that are most surely believed: the divine inspiration of the Bible, salvation by grace through faith, the reality of heaven and hell to name but three. These are truths that, if denied, those folk could hardly call themselves Christian. In such instances Paul warned us to keep an eye on those causing dissensions and hindrances and turn away from them.

This subject is not one in that category. Not all Christians agree on what might be referred to as secondary (as opposed to foundational) doctrinal matters. The spirit in which **Romans 14** and **15** is written should apply. Let's not 'strain on gnats!' (**Matthew 23:24**).

There is no coincidence that this area has caused so much strife in the church. A fully powered church is the last thing that the enemy wants to see. Consequently it is also no coincidence that the centre piece of the major passage on the spiritual gifts is **1 Corinthians 13**. The theme of loving one another is there throughout the relevant passages, starting with the words of our Lord in that upstairs room. Tatham proposes four “indispensable principles” for maintaining Christian fellowship:

“All of these must be done for strengthening of the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:26)

“Everything should be done in an orderly and fitting way.” (1 Corinthians 14:40)

“Do everything in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14)

“Do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Amen!

