**The Gifts of the Spirit 1 Cor 12:1-11**

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are probably one of the most mysterious, misunderstood and under-utilised facets of our Christian experience.

And yet these very gifts, these wonderful, enigmatic, life-changing expressions of God’s power and love through us are the key for effective ministry and mission.

So important are they to our work and witness for the Lord that the Apostle Paul commences these chapters on the Gifts and their operation by saying he would not have us to be ignorant – uninformed – about them. In other words, no matter how scary they may seem and how wary we may be - we cannot afford to ignore the Gifts of the Spirit.

And indeed, at the end of 1 Cor 12 he goes further and encourages us to eagerly, earnestly desire the gifts. So not only should we not be ignorant of them – we should be looking and longing for them.

There isn’t time in one brief session for an in-depth study, but that is a blessing in disguise, for the Gifts of the Spirit are not about theological study but rather understanding the practical and powerful ways in which God can work through us on a daily basis.

Indeed, what Paul writes here is not an academic treatise on the Gifts but a synopsis, a descriptive summary of the different ways in which God worked through the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels and through the ministry of His people in the book of Acts.

So today, I want to give a brief overview of the Gifts, leaving time for examples of how I’ve seen them work through my life. First of all – 3 questions to get us started on the Gifts – what are they, why are they given, to whom are they given….

**What are they?**

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power. They fall into 3 Categories:

**VOCAL** Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues.

There will be a separate session on prophecy – but it may be helpful at this point to say something about speaking in tongues, or speaking in a language you haven’t learned. There is a difference I believe between the gift of tongues in public, in a church gathering – which should always be accompanied by the gift of interpretation – and speaking in tongues in private which is a powerful aid to prayer and to building up your faith. (1 Cor 14:18 & Jude 20)

**REVELATORY** Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom, Discerning of Spirits.

These are instances of the Holy Spirit giving insight into what is happening in the spiritual realm, behind the scenes as it were, to help you see and understand the bigger picture.

**POWER** Miracles, Healing and Faith.

Instances of supernatural signs and wonders, healings, faith to believe for the miraculous – accomplished not by you but through you by the Holy Spirit.

The bottom-line about the Gifts is that they are His – He is the source of the power, the message or the revelation. They are not something we have heard, surmised, worked out or accomplished by our own effort or cleverness or research or even guesswork. They are God the Holy Spirit working through you, giving you information, guidance and power to help in any given situation.

**Why are they given?**

Quite simply, for the common good (1 Cor 12:7 & 14:2,4,5) For the blessing and building up of one another, *and* for breakthrough in witnessing to others. The Holy Spirit works in us and through us to elevate, to upgrade our ministry and mission into the realm of the supernatural, it is equipping for breakthrough, supernatural enabling.

This is Spirit-enabled, Spirit-empowered ministry – for the common good, to bless others. The gifts are not for you , they are through you, for the blessing and breakthrough in the lives of others. That is motivation to not be shy and retiring.

And the sphere of operation of the gifts can be anywhere – wherever you happen to be……………

**In Church** 1 Cor 14:23,26 – when you come together, and again, for the common good. Col 2:19, as you hold fast the head who is Jesus, His Spirit equips you with something to help *the other*, and He equips *the other* with something to help you. Why? By this method we reflect the selfless image of the Triune God. This is faith that works, expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)

**In Public** Mission & witness. It was by supernatural revelation and empowering

* That Jesus was able to minister to the woman at the well – and the gospel spread to the Samaritans (John 4)
* That Peter was able to speak to Cornelius – and the gospel spread to the Gentiles (Acts 10)
* That Philip was able to speak with the Ethiopian – and the gospel spread to Africa (Acts 8)
* That Paul realised the young girl following them around in Philippi needed deliverance. (Acts 16)
* That Paul knew a man in Lystra crippled from birth had faith to be healed. (Acts 14)

The list goes on and on – the gospels and Acts are heaving with Spirit-empowered witness and ministry.

**To whom are they given?**

1 Cor 12:6 & 11 are quite clear – to all people, to each and every one! What Jesus did He did by the empowering and enabling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). You can read that verse you’re your name inserted – for the enabling of the Holy Spirit is for you!

Peter made it quite explicit on the Day of Pentecost - Repent and be baptised and you will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit – He is not an optional extra, He is essential and integral to your salvation, your Christian experience and your ministry for the Lord.

God is no respecter of persons – the Holy Spirit wants to express His love and power through all God’s children, not a select or elite few.

And while it’s true that you may be more comfortable operating in a particular gift of the Spirit – speaking a prophetic word, giving words of encouragement and comfort, praying for healing – it is also true that it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the Giver and He can equip and empower you in any given situation, as and when needed. The Gifts (plural) of the Holy Spirit are transitory but ***the*** Gift of the Holy Spirit abides….He abides in you and wants to work through you for the blessing of others.

Be Open, Be Bold, Be Hungry.