

OVERCOMER MINISTRIES

Hands reaching around the world...

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Romans 8:37

UNLEASHING THE KINGDOM

By: Roy Ralph (Part Four)

In part one we began to look at the scripture that says: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." We discovered that the Gospel of Salvation is not the full Gospel of the Kingdom it is only where we start in our relationship with the Kingdom of God. We also saw that the Gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached for a witness. We then saw where Jesus said the Kingdom of God was within us and it will grow if we give it the right conditions. We also found that the Kingdom is the realm of the King and the citizens of the Kingdom manifest the culture and nature of the Kingdom. In part two we began to see the basis for unleashing the Kingdom was allowing God to change us to become like Jesus, expressing His nature and the culture of His Kingdom. We found that the character of God is what is needed and that God is loving and good, and He desires to do good things in and through us. We also saw that the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and what each of these means to us as the Body of Christ. In part three we looked at some of the parables and how they relate to us as servants of Jesus. We also began to see what we must do to establish the Kingdom of God within our individual and corporate lives. Psalms 31:19 says: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the

sons of men!” Let us now look at some of the things that God has laid up for those who trust and seek Him. This is not an exhaustive list but simply a starting place to see what God has set aside for those who follow Jesus.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We have been looking at the Kingdom of God and expressing the Divine character that God desires to see manifested through us. Now we need to see what God can and will do through those who manifest His character. First Corinthians 4:20 says: “For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” Too often people look at our original Scripture where it speaks of the Kingdom of God being preached and believe that is all there is to seeing the Kingdom of God manifested – preaching it. Yet, Paul says that it isn’t in word but in power. This doesn’t mean we don’t preach about the Kingdom of God, but that preaching by itself is not enough. There needs to be a demonstration of the Kingdom of God through a lifestyle and through the power of God being on display. We should note that in verse 19 Paul said he would come to them not knowing the word of those who were puffed up but the power. Paul was concerned about speaking truth but he was also concerned about the power of God being seen through those who said they were Christians; followers of Jesus. Later on in his letter to Corinth he relates what we call the Spiritual gifts or the gifts of the Spirit.

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

To get the full context of what Paul is speaking of please read First Corinthians 12:1-13 and Romans 12:6-13, (though we will only use the list of gifts as listed in 1 Cor. 12). Paul starts out by telling us that he didn’t want us to be ignorant of the Spiritual gifts. There are many people, including preachers, that will accept some of these gifts and explain others as though they are either no longer available to the Body of Christ today or they are something less than what Paul declares them to be. Most of the church world will

accept gifts such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, and even a lot of them would accept healing. Although, they may explain knowledge as what one has learned in school more than what the Spirit of God drops into a person's mind. Also they consider healing as coming through doctors and modern medicine not from the Lord. The main gifts that churches have a problem with are prophecy, tongues and interpretation, miracles, and even discerning of spirits. Many churches will explain prophesy as being inspired preaching, which it can be. However, that is totally ignoring the examples such as the prophets Isaiah, John, and the prophets mentioned in Acts 13:1. Consider the psychics of today? Since the enemy of our soul only counterfeits what is real and the psychics of today are still speaking a form of prophecy, doesn't it stand to reason that they are counterfeiting the true gift of prophecy? It is also ignoring the gifts of healing and miracles. They say those were necessary for that day but not for today.

There are also those who explain tongues and interpretation as the ability to understand and speak other languages. This can also be true but it still doesn't do away with the heavenly language that a person can have. Paul tells us that tongues is our prayer language and at times is spoken in the church to be interpreted. (See Rom. 8:26-27; 1 Cor. 14:5, 27; and 13:1, tongues of men and angels). Paul said he didn't want us to be ignorant, yet, that is the state of many today; ignorant of the spiritual gifts God has given His church.

He then reminds the Corinthians that they used to have trances where they were "carried away" and spoke or did things without being in control of what they said or did. Corinth was a big sea port and drugs and prostitution was a way of life for them. They had many gods and each god had an idol. Their "worship" was varied and often involved the use of various drugs. They had meetings where they were carried away in a trance and would speak and do things that

they didn't remember later. Some today seem to think that when we prophesy or speak in tongues that we are also to be in a trance and have no control over what we say or do. This is not the truth. Paul is saying that unlike those who are not saved, we are to have conscious control. He says in 1 Cor. 14:32-33 that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Since this is in the plural form we know that it is speaking of the spirit of the prophet not the Holy Spirit. We are to be in control of our spirit, which means we can obey the Holy Spirit or we can ignore or even disobey the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God never forces us to do or say anything. He is always a gentleman and He strengthens the human personality; He empowers not overpowers us. It is the enemy that tries to force us to do or say things, which will not glorify the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit will always glorify the Lord and harmonize with the truth in the Word about Jesus as He is always endeavoring to bring us under the Lordship of Jesus. All the gifts of the Spirit are there for those who love and honor Jesus, to bring us into a greater understanding and relationship with Him. They are also there to enable us to reveal the Kingdom of God to others so they can have a personal relationship with Jesus.

DO THE GIFTS STILL OPERATE TODAY?

As stated earlier, the gifts operated freely in the early church, especially through Peter, Paul, and the other disciples. (See: Acts 3; 5; 11:27 & 40; 12; 13:1; First Cor. 14:15, 18, 26, and 29). Some state that it is because of the dispensation they lived in and we live in a different dispensation. They even use 1 Cor. 13:9-10 where it says: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away". What is the thing that has come that is perfect? Some say it is speaking of the coming of Jesus as though He had not already come. Jesus had already been crucified, resurrected and ascended so it isn't speaking of His coming as in Isaiah, but it could be speaking of His second coming, which hasn't happened yet. Others declare it is the Bible and

since we have the Bible we don't need prophecy etc. and if it is speaking of the Bible then which translation; the King James Version? The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, not English. Every version we have is a translation and doesn't always give the best meaning of a word in the original. As an example, the English word "love" is used when translating three different words from the Greek, which speak of different types of love.

So what does 1 Corinthians 13:10 mean when it says "when that which is perfect is come"? That which is perfect is Jesus and He has not appeared in His second coming and nowhere does the Lord say these gifts have stopped. Therefore since the Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever, (Heb. 13:8), we must believe the spiritual gifts are still for us today.

First Corinthians 12:1, 4–7 teaches us that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Deut. 33:27 speaks of our God as the eternal God and Psa. 145:13 says that His kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom and His dominion endures throughout all generations. (See also: Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; Rev. 11:15; 1:5). He is eternal, His Kingdom is everlasting, His dominion endures throughout all generations, and the gifts of the Spirit are a part of His kingdom. Therefore, it is apparent that the gifts of the Spirit are also eternal and should be in operation today as they were in the early church and throughout many generations.

Paul speaks of the diversity of gifts but the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the greatest gift given to man after our salvation, thus the gifts come from the greatest gift, which is eternal. The phrase "differences of administrations" helps us to understand that the Holy Spirit gives to each one as He determines not as we think it should be. Verse 11 tells us the

gifts are distributed as the Holy Spirit wills not necessarily as a person desires. However, if we desire a certain gift it is possible that is the gift the Lord is giving us. The diversity of gifts as determined by the Holy Spirit is due to the diversity of humanity and an individual's ability to carry certain responsibilities. The diversity also shows us the essential unity of the Godhead in the manifestation of the Spirit as each gift in operation through an individual should agree with and compliment the other gifts being administered through other individuals. These gifts become the ministry from which the Spirit of God operates through His people, which were modeled by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, and His gifts do not spring from a human source. As Paul stated the diversities of activities or operations are the work of God. Just as Jesus said that all He did and said was from the Father, so all that we do and say by the Spirit of God is also from the Father, glorifying the Son. Each gift is a manifestation of the Spirit through an individual; it is visible evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity. (v.7)

In verses 8-11 Paul specifies nine gifts of the Spirit that are distributed through the church as manifestations of the Spirit. These gifts and a definition of each gift as related in the Spirit Filled Life Bible are as follows. 1) Word of Wisdom – a spiritual utterance at a given moment, supernaturally disclosing the mind, purpose, and way of God as applied to a specific situation. 2) Word of Knowledge – a supernatural revelation of information pertaining to a person or an event, given for a specific purpose, usually having to do with an immediate need, such as healing. 3) Word of Faith – a unique form of faith that goes beyond natural faith and saving faith. It supernaturally trusts and does not doubt with reference to the specific matters involved. 4) Gifts of Healing – those healings God performs supernaturally. The plural suggest that as there are many sicknesses and diseases, the gift is related to healings of many disorders. 5) Working of Miracles – a manifestation of power beyond the ordinary course of natural law. It is a divine enablement to do

something that could not be done naturally. 6) Prophecy – a divine disclosure, an edifying revelation of the Spirit for the moment; a sudden insight of the Spirit, prompting exhortation or comfort; (see 1Cor. 14:3, 30). 7) Discerning of Spirits – the ability to discern the spirit world, and especially to detect the true source of circumstances or motives of people. 8) Different Kinds of Tongues – speaking supernaturally in a language not known to the individual. The plural allows different forms, possibly harmonizing the known spoken languages of Acts. 2:4-6 and the unknown translational utterances in Corinthians, designed particularly for praying and singing in the Spirit, mostly for private worship. 9) Interpretation of Tongues – rendering the translational (not irrational) message of the Spirit meaningful to others when exercised in public. It is not the translation of a foreign language. (Note: None of the gifts require a “public” setting, although each may and should be welcomed in corporate gatherings.)

In verses 12-26 Paul begins to compare the church to the human body. He shows how the wide diversity of gifts assures unity in the church. Each gift contributes something necessary to the common life and growth of the whole. There is no room for pride and no need to feel inferior in the body of Christ, for each individual is essential to the proper function of the body. There is one body of Christ and the Spirit baptizes us into that body. Also there is no difference due to race or economic condition. The operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is, or should be, the common life of Christians as the supernatural becomes natural for all believers. All believers should be naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural.

Throughout the rest of 1 Corinthians 12 Paul gives us practical application of the gifts of the Spirit with lessons on the human body. Through this we can see that no one has all the gifts though some may feel they have operated in all the gifts at some time in their ministry. However, all the gifts

are not “resident” gifts. The resident gift is that gift or gifts that the Holy Spirit operates through an individual on a regular basis, even at times when that person may not realize they are being used of the Holy Spirit. The appearance of ranking the gifts in the last few verses is actually a mix of gifts, ministries, and activities of God, illustrating how variety and diversity operate in different people but not a special ranking of ministries. It is also possible that Paul is simply saying the apostles were appointed first, then came prophets, teachers and the others in the building of the church. Paul then asks if all are apostles etc. and the question itself anticipates a negative response. It also indicates that not everyone will use tongues, prophesy etc. in the church meeting, but it should not be seen as indicating that not everyone will speak in tongues in their private life. This is something that every believer should experience. Verse 31 teaches us to “earnestly desire the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way.” The word “best” might be defined as that gift or gifts most needed at the moment. While the word “yet” indicates the continuation of the subject of the gifts. He is saying the gifts must at the same time manifest in love, for love is the ultimate issue behind all things.

SO WHAT?

What difference does it make if a person operates in one or more of the gifts of the Spirit or not? There are some who do not feel the gifts of the Spirit are applicable for today. Does it make a difference? The answer to that is yes. The gifts of the Spirit are the manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is the agreement of God with us that we are His children and through us the power of God is allowed to operate. The gifts of the Spirit reveal the presence of Jesus in the earth through His people. It is the ultimate witnessing “tool” that brings others to salvation. It is available to every believer whether they use those gifts or not. Let me give a carnal example. Let us say a person left a will with a statement that there was a million dollars in the bank for

someone. If they never went to the bank and withdrew that money they would be denying the existence of that money or at least their relationship to the person who left the money. They would never experience the joy of having or of making others happy through the use of the million dollars. When we are used of God in the gifts of the Spirit, we not only receive joy in the presence of the Spirit of God within ourselves, but we are denying others of the relationship they can experience as God moves through us.

Some people may think that the operation of the gifts of the Spirit is so they can do things for God and will enable them to be noticed as God's man or woman of power. It will build up their ministry. That isn't the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are given so Jesus can be manifested in the life of a believer and draw attention to the saving power of God, not to our ministry. The gifts are a revelation that God loves them and cares about them. It draws people to salvation and to a personal relationship with Jesus.

KEEPING DILIGENCE

Hebrews 2:1, tells us it is "necessary that we with more diligence keep the things which we have heard, so that we do not fall." In other words, we need to pay attention to those things we have been taught so we don't fail in our relationship with God. He goes on to say in verse 2 that every disobedience of Israel received its just reward. Then in verses 3 & 4 he 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 us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

We need to pay special attention to some things in these verses. We are to be diligent to keep the things we have heard. These things are not fables or stories that have been handed down through generations of uneducated

people as some would like to say today. Instead, these things were first taught by the Lord, Who only did what He saw the Father do and only spoke what He heard the Father say. Then His disciples followed His example and spoke of Jesus and recorded for us all that Jesus began to say and do. That isn't all. Their words were also confirmed by God through the signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit through the Body of Christ.

Many would indicate that we now have the Bible with the record of the teachings and miracles of the Lord and the disciples so we no longer need the gifts of the Spirit. Once again this portion of scripture says we need to be diligent, even careful, to not ignore what God is saying and doing today. God bore them witness through signs, miracles, etc. so that people would understand that God loved them and cared for them. He confirmed their word through the signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit. How important is it than that we speak what we hear our Heavenly Father say and do as we see Him do and allow Him to confirm His Word and love through us? The gifts of the Spirit are not only available for us today but necessary.

SEEK FIRST

Mark 16:17 starts by saying "And these signs will follow those who believe ...". The gifts of God are given to us as an indication of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but also to draw others to a personal relationship with Jesus. They are not given to us to build up recognition for our ministry or personal agenda, but to bring life and strength to others as they see God healing them and setting them free. God has poured out His love in sending His son Jesus and has given us the gifts of the Spirit to enable us to reveal Jesus as well. The Holy Spirit is within us enabling us with the power of God to heal and do miracles today, establishing His Kingdom. The prophets declared that the glory of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. This will only happen as we allow the Word of God to change us

and the Holy Spirit to work through us revealing the life and power of God to others. The signs, wonders, and miracles of God should be a natural way of life for believers as we release the Kingdom of God in our daily lives.

Yet part of the problem we find is that many believers seek for the signs and wonders instead of seeking for the presence of God. Jesus told us the signs would follow but He also said to “seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Mat 6:33) The gifts of the Spirit with the signs, wonders and miracles will follow us as we seek the Kingdom of God more than we seek the gifts. The gifts of God come through a personal relationship with the Giver of those gifts – the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit anointing. Throughout this message, (all four parts) I have tried to emphasize the releasing of the Kingdom of God comes through that personal relationship with Jesus. It is by understanding what He has accomplished for us, has made available to us, and desires to accomplish through us that the Kingdom of God is released. Jesus didn’t come and die on the cross just so we can be saved and go to heaven, though that is a benefit. He came to reveal the love and character of the Father that should be revealed through us today. As the character of God is revealed so will the love for His creation and the manifestation of the Spirit to change those things that are not of Him into that which brings Him glory and honor. We are the vessels of honor that He desires to use today to bring deliverance to all creation. The whole creation is groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:18-22), and all that they are and do through the Spirit of the living God. Rise up and see the Kingdom of God revealed through you.

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