



## SPIRITUAL GIFTS PART 2: THE REVELATORY GIFTS

1 Cor. 14, get a note sheet. Last week gave a doctrinal overview of spiritual gifts—and we said that God has given each believer spiritual gift(s) and our responsibility is to use them to build the church. And we tabled a certain category of gifts—miraculous gifts—for an at-length discussion today. **Metro Church of God experience**. My first experience. And I really didn't know what to think (didn't hear the interpretation). Very skeptical. Is this still a thing? On a more day-today level, people say all the time, "God told me." **Real Estate Agent** Should we expect private revelations? And I think when it comes to gifts like tongues and prophecy these are very natural and appropriate questions to ask. If you're visiting this isn't our normal thing—three weeks starting 1-2 Peter verse-by-verse. But you can't teach on spiritual gifts and act like the ones we may be less comfortable with aren't there. I've never spoken in tongues. Not a pet issue for me. Not trying to rename our church New Century Ascending Fire Deliverance Center. But we can't pretend like these gifts aren't in the text right next to gifts like teaching and service. Have to say something.

And to set the table for our conversation, we need to make three observations up front (1) This issue is complex. A. Textual, historical, theological arguments on both sides and unique dangers with the two main views. More academic than normal! Wish it was super simple. B. People's differing experiences. What do we say about people who experience them? Spurgeon, in the middle of his sermon, **"Young man, those gloves you are wearing have not been paid for: you have stolen them from your employer."** After the service he came up... **"He placed a pair of gloves on the table and said, 'It's the first time I have robbed my master, and I will never do it again...'"** My friends in Eclectic, didn't get swept up! It's complex. Observation #2.

(2) There's not *one* orthodox view like deity of Christ. This is a good ole-fashion debate. Not "a" Reformed view on miraculous gifts. If you look at the Westminster Confession and catechisms, Belgic, Heidelberg, none of them endorse a specific view of the miraculous gifts or even directly address them. On miraculous gifts, Martin Luther and John Knox said yes. Calvin and Edwards largely said no. There's not "a" conservative view. John Piper, David Platt, Mark Dever say yes. Tim Keller, J.I. Packer, John McArthur say no. Not "a" Southern Baptist view. SBC pres J.D Greear says yes, they are for today. President of Southern Seminary—Al Mohler—says no. I am not pretending to offer the final answer today or persuade you to a certain position. I'm still working out in my own doctrine and in light of the all the disagreement among godly men and women, we need to be really humble in whatever conclusions we draw today. Which leads to observation #3

(3) Can't divide over this. This is not a first order doctrine or a test for orthodoxy. We can disagree about these things and still come to the Lord's table as brothers and sisters. Billy Graham, **"On the occasion of a particular infilling, tongues may be a sign God gives some, but I do not find that it is a sign for all. I do think it is important, though, for each of us to hold our opinion without rancor and without breaking our bonds of fellowship in Jesus Christ."** People can tend to be really passionate about this. People who look at folks who believe in the miraculous gifts and label them as deceived, and dangerous; who build their doctrine on experience not Scripture. Others look at those who reject miraculous gifts and conclude that they constantly quench the Spirit and have a static, powerless faith that's not compelling to the world. We just have to show charity. United by Christ, not by our view on this issue. **Pray.**

So to help us get our head around what we're supposed to think about these miraculous gifts, let's start the conversation where I think we all need to agree.

### Where We Must Agree...

- Many spiritual gifts are still in play for the church.

The debate I'm mapping for you this morning is not about whether spiritual gifts in general are still a thing. Everyone agrees spiritual gifts are operable and important for building the church. The disagreement centers around whether a handful of gifts still exists, specifically what are called revelatory gifts—gifts involving communicating something The Holy Spirit has moved them to say or revealed to them.

- The Holy Spirit still works supernaturally.

There should be no question in our minds that the Spirit works powerfully and supernaturally today. God is not retired. He still does miracles. He still heals people. We should pray for healing. So, whether or not God works powerfully or supernaturally should be undisputed. Not what we're asking today. Finally...

- The Spirit received *at conversion* is sufficient to empower all operable gifts.

- Direct Scripture-quality revelation has ceased.

Whatever we determine about tongues or prophecy, no Jeremiahs or Pauls walking around. No one can offer theological teaching and say “thus says the Lord” kind of way. Jude 3 the faith has been “once for all delivered to the saints.” No one speaking Scripture-quality words, where disobey what they're saying is necessarily to disobey God. Not saying God doesn't speak (sermons, pastor, Bible). No immediate, fresh authoritative revelation happening. Having said, that let's move to the two major camps in this debate. Now there are actually more than two views here, but all of them are more or less versions of these two categories.

### Where We May Differ: Are All of The Gifts Operable Today?

- Continuationism: Yes. All of the NT gifts are for today.

The Holy Spirit is just as active and powerful. Distributes all the gifts we see in the NT—tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles. With respect to miraculous gifts, nothing has changed between now and then.

- Cessationism: No. Minimally, the *revelatory* gifts have ceased.

- Revelatory = tongues, prophecy, word of knowledge etc.

Now cessationists don't deny that God does miracles or is powerfully active. But they deny that we should seek miraculous gifts—especially prophecy or tongues—or that anyone actually has those as gifts. **Chad story.** No problem with this story. No problem with God raising up someone on the mission field. Calvin, “The Lord raised up [apostles, prophets, and evangelists] at the beginning of his kingdom, and still occasionally raises them up when the necessity of the times requires.” God may occasionally do these things, but they are the rare exception, not the norm. Shouldn't expect to regularly characterize your life or the life of the local church.

These are the two main camps—and I haven't offered any arguments for against either position, I've just described them. As far as the miraculous gifts regularly exercised and present in the life of the church, continuationists say yes, cessationists say no. So, having given you a sketch of these two, I'm going to spend a few minutes defending each view as if it was my own—best case for both. To be clear, presenting each view, I am not necessarily endorsing either view. In fact, as I said earlier, I'm not trying to persuade you to take a specific view today. I want you to have an understanding of each view in it's strongest form.

### Central Argument for Continuationism...

So, the strongest argument—not an endorsement—of continuationism would go something like this:

- Paul clearly exhorts his hearers to prophesy. (1 Cor. 14:1)
  - “Do not forbid speaking in tongues...” (1 Cor. 14:39, 5)

1 Cor. 14:1, “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” Clear as day. Vs. 5 same passage, “Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.” Clearly Paul wants us to speak in tongues and prophecy. Notice that tongues are just prophecy that needs to be interpreted. Paul wants both! But there’s more, vs 39 “So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.” How many times would he need to say it? How could he be more clear? Rom. 12 “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;” Prophecy next to service—can’t cherry pick. He clearly intends for us to have and use these gifts, and not only that, but it seems clear that...

- These gifts continue until Christ returns. (1 Cor. 13:9-10)
  - No mention of the gifts ever stopping in this age.

1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12. “As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away”...tongues and prophecy will pass away. When? When the perfect comes. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” This is talking about Christ’s return and seeing him face to face. So, the tongues and prophecy he’s talking about will pass away when Jesus returns—but not until then. Said differently, tongues and prophecy continue to operate until we see Jesus face to face. There isn’t slightest mention of them being confined to a specific period in church history or just functioning until the last book of the NT was written. And besides what of all the people who speak in tongues? Are ALL crazy? Thus, it seems in light of these experiences and particularly Paul’s clear exhortation to prophesy, in light of his insistence that these gifts will only pass away when Jesus returns, the burden of proof lies on anyone who thinks we should hear Paul tell us to desire to prophesy, and literally do the opposite of what he says and hold that it doesn’t even exist anymore. And for those reasons, you should be a continuationist.

### Central Argument for Cessationism...

- If prophecy still operates, the Scriptures aren’t complete!
  - Tongues = prophecy needing interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5)

Prophecy in the Bible refers to the Spirit producing Scripture-quality divinely authoritative words through someone. Think Jeremiah. Think Ezekiel. When these people spoke, it was the Lord speaking and it was always completely true. And that’s what prophecy is. So if you argue that prophecy is for the church today, you’re saying that that’s still happening. You’re arguing that God is still giving the church fresh divine revelation. He’s gifted some people to speak Scripture-quality words that are authoritative. That’s just what prophecy is. What Jeremiah said, is no more authoritative than the guy who just offered a prophecy. It’s just God speaking then and now. But God doesn’t speak like that through people anymore—and you know that. You probably wouldn’t be willing to name one person who you think has the ability to speak Scripture quality words—that has the gift of prophecy. And the reason for that they just don’t exist anymore. Why?

- Prophecy served to establish the church’s doctrinal foundation and ceased sometime after John wrote Revelation.
  - “...built on the *foundation of the apostles and prophets...*” (Eph. 2:20)

Prophets and apostles played a very specific role for a limited time to instruct the church until the—NT—was completed. Paul in Eph. 2:20 talking about the church says, “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,” Apostles and prophets—and these are NT prophets here—laid the foundation for the church. The church is built on the foundation *not the continuation* of these apostles and prophets. They are no longer necessary because we have the Bible. “We don’t have any new revelation because the final and definitive revelation has been given in Jesus Christ...The work of laying the foundation, which culminated in the canon of the scripture, is finished. No further word of God is needed or sought. What we need is the illuminating work of the Spirit and prayer to understand the word that has been vouchsafed to us.” (Schreiner)

Furthermore, God granted miraculous gifts in general not to exist forever, but to validate the legitimacy of the early church in a religiously diverse culture. Heb. 2:3 “3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” They were given as a way to show that this new form of Judaism, was legit. To help it get traction in it’s initial stages. We’re happy to admit that God still does miracles like this is frontier territories. But in places where the Gospel is known, there’s no reason to expect these gifts.

Besides where are they in church history—barely there? Now? Is it bc the Holy Spirit is weaker now or doesn’t want to build the body of Christ? Summary: If you believe in prophecy, you believe in continuing divine revelation. This is a mistake.

Revelatory speaking gifts until NT was finished. Jude 3. They are unnecessary and adding to them is dangerous. Miraculous gifts to establish credibility. And for those reasons, you should be a cessationist.

Continuationists	Cessationists
<p><b>No.</b> It’s <i>fallible</i> and can be <i>mixed with error</i>. That’s precisely why it needs to be judged by others (1 Cor. 14:29). It’s why Paul disregarded those who spoke to him “through the Spirit” in Acts 21:4-6.</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b> In Scripture, prophecy is always and only, “Thus says the Lord.” <i>Anything else isn’t “prophecy”</i>. Call it something else. God may give an “impression”, but call it that, and don’t confuse the two.</p>

**Isn’t this fun???**

Now maybe you’re confused and don’t know what to think. That’s ok. I’m going to help us narrow this debate down to help us focus on the one area where most of the disagreement occurs. I can save you a lot of time and research, by telling you that much of the debate we’re discussing today comes down to what you believe about one question...

### THE Foundational Question...

- Is NT prophecy identical to OT prophecy?

It all comes down to this question. Isn’t that clarifying? Now there’s still more to say, but if you can arrive at an answer to this question, you’ve largely determined which camp you’re in or lean toward. **Explain ^^**

### Five Questions to Ask: **EACH QUESTION W/VERSE ON INDIVIDUAL SLIDE**

**(1) Does Paul’s disregard for prophecy in Acts 21:4-6 indicate that NT prophecy isn’t Scripture-quality?**

“And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey...we went on board the ship, and they returned home.”

In fact, Paul says in the chapter before this in vs 22 that he is constrained by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

(2) Does 1 Thess. 5:19-21 indicate that NT prophecy can be mixed with error? “19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.”

(3) Would Paul forbid female prophets (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5) from speaking in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34) if he understood prophecy to be immediate Divine revelation?

(4) In 1 Cor. 14:5, is Paul wishing that *everyone* would speak on the level of Jeremiah and Ezekiel? “Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy...” (1 Cor 14:5)

(5) In saying that tongues and prophecy will cease, “when the perfect comes”, is Paul referring to Christ’s coming or the completion of the Scriptures? (1 Cor. 13:9-12)

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 Cor. 13:12

### Tentative Conclusions...

If I had to put my cards on the table: “Thus, it is possible to hold a cessationist view of inspiration (no more infallible utterances) and a continuationist view with respect to noninspired forms.” Vern Poythress

- God still prompts words and actions in ways *that are not Divinely authoritative* or Scripture-quality in nature.
  - This *may or may not* be lowercase “p” prophecy and must always be submitted to and consistent with Scripture. Everyone has said this from time to time. “God led me to do something” God may very well, work like this in others lives more frequently than yours. I think it would be wise to ask for this—a unique sensitivity to the Spirit’s prompting for ministry to certain people in certain circumstances. “There is no question but that God’s people can look for and expect “leadings”, “guidance”, indications of what they are meant to do ...Men have been told by the Holy Spirit to do something; they knew it was the Holy Spirit speaking to them; and it transpired that it obviously was his leading. It seems clear to me that if we deny such a possibility we are again guilty of quenching the Spirit.” And it’s worth noting that...

If prophecy exists, it often looks like encouragement. 1 Cor. 14:3, “On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. He says prophecy and tongues are for upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation. Why don’t we just call it encouragement—we can, but Paul calls it prophecy. This is the kind of prophecy I’m open to. I’d say something very similar about tongues at least in their public expression. Certainly can’t forbid them (1 Cor. 14:39). So God still prompts, non-authoritative utterances and actions.

- God still works through dreams and visions. (Acts 2:17 cf. Joel 2:28)
  - Not Scripture-quality. Understood in submission to Scripture.

God still works in these ways. Acts 2:17 “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” But experience is not authoritative! J.D. Greear story. Everything must be submitted to Scripture! God will never lead you to do something—be it in a dream vision or otherwise—that contradicts the Word. It is the theological grid through which any impression, feeling, or thought has to be filtered. Tons of people who are deceived and deceiving others. Paul warns against false prophets. The word is our final rule, and consequently...

- With respect to instruction for Christian doctrine and practice, we have everything we need in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We don't need these gifts. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16 Skeptical of anyone who makes them sound like they play a crucial role or who is overly enamored with them. Hasn't hurt our church.

- In seeking the gifts, we should not fear that God will give us a gift that is no longer operable. If I'm wrong nothing happens. If you are, you miss out. Simply put I don't want to miss out on any blessing that the Holy Spirit has for me because my doctrine was wrong. Example prayer. Shouldn't be trusting God for a spiritual gift but for the gift of eternal life. "I wonder if God is speaking to me" He is. I can tell you that God is saying repent and believe on Christ. I don't want us to miss out or be foolish—want the full measure of the Spirit poured out in the life of this church.