

Sermon Transcript from 17th Aug 2025 – Gifts of the Spirit in Action

References: Psalm 148:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Speaker: Tony Randall

Sermon TLDR

This sermon discusses **the gifts of the Holy Spirit** and their role within the Christian faith delving into a summary of a previous sermon on "**no half measures**," advocating for total commitment to Christ. The core of the discussion then shifts to the spiritual gifts mentioned in Paul's letters, particularly 1 Corinthians 12, emphasising that **each believer receives at least one gift for the purpose of helping one another and serving God**. Specific gifts likewise advice, special knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discernment are explored, with the speaker highlighting that these gifts, unlike the fruit of the Spirit, are to be developed and actively used for the **benefit of the church and the wider community**.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/T7YgzTCvkvA?t=3040>

Sermon Transcript

We're going to focus on the gifts of the spirit.

But before that, I wonder if you know what Philip has arranged that we can take the benefit from Sunday's sermons, provided they're worth listening to, of course.

That is uh he's arranged that using modern technology. First of all, the sermon, the whole service you can what watch if you if you want later in the week but in particular, uh there are two [or three] other things that he's done. They are to pull out the sermon so that if you don't have the time, you can watch and listen to the sermon, created podcasts for each of those sermons, and then a transcript.

So, for example, with Peter Williams's sermon last Sunday, no half measures, there's the [summary] paragraph, that's all, and I'm going to read it.

At the moment which you can just by going to the church website look and see the summary of the sermon and think through what are the lessons that I should be taking note of and then the transcript and two people, sadly with American voices, then discuss that sermon if you can forget the Americanization they're very well worth listening to and you can get those for pretty well all of the last couple of months or so for services just by going to the church website clicking on the right page and pressing the button.

But this is how they summarized Peter's message from last Sunday. So it's a kind of bitter revision but linking into what I'm going to talk about this morning...

The theme was no half measures in which Peter advocate for total commitment in the Christian faith, exploring what this entails through three main sessions. Firstly, examined Moses as an Old Testament example of commitment, discussing his leadership qualities and foresight in appointing a successor. Secondly, the speaker addressed how individuals respond to Jesus' call, contrasting enthusiastic but uncalculating followers with those who offer excuses ultimately expressing that true commitment means living a transformed life without reservation. And finally, Peter delved into the concept of freedom in Christ,

differentiating spiritual freedom from political or self-indulgent freedom freedoms and concluding that this genuine freedom is reflected in the fruit of the spirit and ultimate expression of Christian commitment.

And if I get it right, there'll be a transcript sometime later this week of what I'm about to say.

So, we come to this penultimate look in the series of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the early church.

It was good to hear Anne's testimony. Some people this week will have received their A levels, some with joy and others with not. And a famous sportsman, British sportsman, decided he would write his testimony, not a Christian testimony, to encourage those whether they'd got good A levels or not, that's Alistair Brownlow, the triathlete, who said that he he'd qualified and went to Oxford to start training to be a doctor. And a few months in, he realized that that wasn't his calling.

He was called to progress his athletic career, and the rest is history. But he's not finished yet, I don't think.

Now we're not all academics and we're not all athletes, but whatever, we should just follow the leading that the Lord has for our lives as I trust many young 18 year-olds and the like are able to do at present.

So, our theme is the gifts of the Holy Spirit but with some reference to the fruit of the spirit as well and that freedom which Jesus brings.

In the New Testament, Paul and others wrote and talked about God, the Holy Spirit. They did it often. We're going to concentrate on that reading that we've just had from Paul's letter to the church at Corinth.

It's the first letter to the Corinthians in the Bible, but scholars believe it was his second and that he probably wrote four or five rather than just the two that we've got. And as we start, we might note that in this letter that in another letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul also wrote about the needs for apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to be always filled with the spirit.

That's a challenge.

So, a bit about those churches at Corinth and Rome to set the scene. Corinth was an ancient city that had been destroyed when the Romans overcame the Macedonian Empire. Think of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great about 150 or so years before. And the Romans were still rebuilding that city at Corinth.

It was a city of many challenges, not least because of its perverted Greek culture, including temper temples where there were perversions of sex and other things which went on. It was a trading port with all that that implied.

And the problem was that the church itself found it difficult to cope with those challenges of that society. They affected it and sometimes infected it and it was those challenges that caused Paul to write to them. And then Rome, well, this was of course the centre of a still developing world empire, highly sophisticated at the top of society, but with many layers lower down until you met the slaves at the bottom, some of whom had a pretty rough life.

They were pretty brutal people. It's a long way from where Paul was writing, probably in Corinth, as it happens. And unlike Corinth, Paul had never been there. Not yet. And he played no part in the creation of their Christian community.

He's never been to Rome. He wants to go. He's eager to go. He hopes to go. So, he writes to the young church there telling them what he's discovered and become in his 30 years or so of being a Christian. And many of us regard this that letter to the Romans as probably the best summary of Christ. Christian doctrine.

So, back to our reading in one Corinthians.

Paul wrote this letter from Ephesus while he was on one of his missionary journeys. In chapter 12, which we had the first bit read to us, and I'm using my New Living Translation, which was a parting gift from Jim. So, thank you, Jim, if you're watching in. Jim is very fond, we discovered on Thursday mornings of his New Living Translation and so I thank him for that.

And we can note three things in that translation. It stands out quite clearly considering concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, that that section that we had read follows on from Paul telling the church at Corinth how they should run Holy Communion. And what we don't often pick up is that it was because they had been doing it quite badly. There were some very bad practices and habits that had crept in. So, he was putting them right and telling them do it right. Do it like this. So, we take that as a model. It's a kind of description or prescription for how to do that.

And secondly that all of chapters 12 to 14. All three of them really tell us about the gifts of the spirit, including that wonderful section on love, Christ cantered love, which we see in chapter 13.

Many of us will have had it as a reading at our weddings. And the gifts are more than just an exhaustive just an exhaustive. They're the outward evidence of God living in us, working in us as we respond not half-heartedly as Peter reminded us last week, but wholeheartedly and fully to the call of Jesus to follow him, to be his disciples.

And the third point Paul makes before listening is it's an answer to a question that the Corinthians had asked him didn't come across quite so clearly. In the reading which we had but here it is in the new living translation "Now dear brothers and sisters regarding your question about the special abilities the spirit gives us and I don't want you to misunderstand this."

So, Paul is saying this is important that we should take notice. Then his answer begins to that question, an identification with Jesus. The Holy Spirit will never cause us to say a bad thing about Jesus, but only good things.

And of course, it's crucial because the primary work of God, the Holy Spirit, is to make Jesus real in each of our lives and through us to share with others. who continues to write that the Holy Spirit is the source of all spiritual gifts that we receive. However different they are and that they are related to our service among each other. We need to note and remember these things.

The context for what Paul writes as a list of the Holy Spirit gifts is crucial. And then in verse 7 we read, "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so that we can help each other."

So, there's no opting out.

Each one of you and me receives at least one gift of the Holy Spirit.

Are you aware of what it is ,or do you have more than one?

And it's given so that we can help one another in the service of God among his people here. and to the benefit of our local community. And here are the gifts that Paul puts here and they're related to everything that we the church undertake.

There's no distinction between spiritual and natural things, sacred and others, and they're for all of us to share in. But let's read through that list as in the New Living Translation, then tell you what the message says, which is a explaining in today's modern language, and then make one or two comments. So, here's the first one...

Wise advice, special knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, unknown languages and their interpretation.

And then Peterson in his message says of wise advice, he calls it counselling. And We all need counselling at times, don't we? We need counselling from people who have God's wisdom. And even the wise people need counselling as well from others.

So, whether you're an archbishop or the pope or whether you're just an ordinary humble Christian, we need the advice, the counselling of wise people.

Do we seek it as often as we should? Do we accept it as readily as we should?

We need to be careful, of course, if we are those gifted with wise advice, to be very careful how we give that advice, where and when. And as a general rule, it's when it has been sought. But we shouldn't be holding back. If we need advice on anything, I need to give time to giving and receiving wise advice and counselling. And then special knowledge or clear understanding.

Our Bible studies on Thursday morning. I can't speak for the evening often show that one or other of us suddenly the penny drops on something and something which we had not quite understood before or hadn't totally understood or understood in a different way becomes crystal clear. And usually because someone in the group has expressed that shown us a bit of knowledge shown us some clear understanding. In that case, usually of the scripture, but not necessarily. It may relate to us discussing how that relates to our everyday life.

Do we seek to get a clear understanding to get special knowledge particularly at a time when as a church we're facing a certain which might well be exciting, might be terrifying, but it's certainly going to be different.

Let's make sure that we listen to those people who do have special understanding and if we have it not be shy but make sure we express it carefully.

And the third one that Paul lists is faith, simple trust. And I think What I find amazing is that when I think about the people who've influenced me in my life as a Christian have often been people uh whose trust in Jesus and following him has been extremely simple.

And I can think instantly of three people none of us any longer with us. But Joan Freedy, Jean Mitchell and Glenis Randall were three people who not with any profound statements but in simple ways showed what Christian life was all about and how to live it and how to trust in God.

When we come to healing, and in this Peterson again talks about healing the sick. And God does do miraculous ways of healing. But normally it's through those who provide medical service in different ways.

When I was young, it was quite often the passion.

Well, when I was first a Christian and in the early years, it seemed to be quite a passion for younger girl Christians to want to be a nurse. They felt called to minister to the sick and help heal them. And I think perhaps too in those days many who went on to qualify as a doctor had a similar calling. It's become rather professionalized now.

I read yesterday of someone who got 37 A-levels wants to be a doctor. Well, not I wonder why they had the time, but why on earth they would want to achieve that many but healing the sick and then miracles, acts or actions where God does something quite out of the ordinary and unexpected and he does it through people.

He might do it through you.

I'm not aware he's done it through me. I'm not conscious that that's my calling, that that's my gifting, but it might be yours. Prophecy or proclamation.

Perhaps a shame that we don't open up our services on Sunday mornings for people regularly to stand up and say this is the word the Lord has given me. Sometimes has happened but not very often.

But if God's given you that gift, don't be shy about sharing it. But find the right opportunity and let's make sure that we listen attentively to those who have been given the gift of prophecy or discernment or proclamation.

And then the next one is discernment, distinguishing between the spirits. There are many spirits around in the world and some of them silly ones, some of them quite dangerous ones. Sometimes we can be misled.

In my early Christian days, I belonged to an organisation and linked with the pastor of the local Pentecostal church linked up with us and suddenly he thought he had a call from God to go to America and a year later he came back acknowledging that it was wishful thinking rather than a call from God.

And we need to make sure that messages that we receive that we can discern what's real and what's been planted in our head perhaps by the devil perhaps just because what we'd like to do or think we want need to do is the right thing.

Let's make sure that we have a spirit of discernment. And if we're facing hard questions steps ago, look to those who we know have a discerning spirit and can distinguish.

And then finally in that list, unknown languages and their interpretation. Now that's in the original translation [as] “talking in tongues”. Something which we don't practice as the Baptist church though individuals within the church may well. Something which we should acknowledge can be a part of God's way of working and dealing within his church and through his people.

But if we are gifted to follow the instructions and the guidance which is given now that's not an exhaustive list but it was an appropriate one for the church of Corinth.

In verse 11, Paul says It's the one and only spirit who distributes all these gifts. The Holy Spirit alone decides which gift each person should have. And we need to remember that and put it into practice. Then Paul spells out how we are one body but many parts that need to work together, but one defective part can infect and affect the whole of the body.

Let's make sure that if God has a gift for us, we accept it graciously, use it wisely, carefully. Make sure that we are an encouragement and an aid not only to Langley Free Church, but to the church of the whole as we work in it.

And then in chapter 13, We have that wonderful lesson on faith, hope, and love and how that love is the constant remaining one. Peter touched on at the end of his sermon last week the fruit of the spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

We find those, of course, in Galatians chapter 5. And all of those, not some of them as with the gifts, but all of those are not only available, but should be part of every Christian's life. From the moment you and I put our trust in Jesus as saviour, God the Holy Spirit would be making each of those an evident fruit in our lives. Fruit needs to grow.

We need to let the Holy Spirit make the fruit of the Holy Spirit grow within us. And gifts need developing. So, fruits grow, gifts start to be developed.

Now it just happens that the greater part of my working career was spent in helping individuals and an organization grow, develop. So, I feel quite passionate about that and so should each of us that God the Holy Spirit wants us to be fruitful and to be using the gifts that he gives us.

And then in last comment about the letter to Corinthians in chapter 13 in verse 28 Paul also identifies apostles, teachers, helpers and as admin administrators as those being gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Then if we move to Romans chapter 12, Paul writes from verse six that in his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well.

So, he lists the gift and then he talks about how we should use that gift.

So, if God has given the ability for prophecy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you.

So, if you're a prophet, use your faith to express what God has told you. If your gift is in serving others, serve them well. Well, not half-heartedly, not 90%. But fully. If you are a teacher, teach well. I've had some bad teachers in my time, and I'm not sure I was a very good teacher either when I was a teacher, but God asks us if we're teaching, and we might be teaching in quite simple ways. You don't have to be in front of a class or a group of people sitting in a circle to teach well.

If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. So easy to look at the negative things and identify a few things that went wrong with their holiday cruise, but she gave us some of the things that were more than made up for that. Encourage. We should all encourage each other, but those who have a special gift of encouraging, do it well.

If your gift is to give, give generously. That may be money, maybe time, maybe effort, but do it generously. God loves a cheerful giver, and the Holy Spirit gives somebody people to be especially good at giving and especially in a position to do so.

If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.

And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tight to what is Good. Love each other with genuine affection. I think one of the things that we sometimes get wrong is when we say hello to people, we say, "How are you?" And we don't usually mean that. So, I think we need to be careful with our greetings to people. Certainly do it in love and generosity but if you don't really want to hear about people's ailments, don't ask the question, you can still show that you love them.

Take delight in honouring one another. Never be lazy but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble. Keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be ready to practice hospitality.

Quite a list of things there, isn't there? We need to be discerning in finding out which one is our gift. And then making sure that we practice it and that we do it not in a mechanical way but being spirited. Use it to enable each of us and others that we are in contact with to benefit from what God wants to do through us.

So love and respect together with hard work and service are the marks which evidence those who are spirit-filled Christians.

How gifted are you?

How gifted am I?

Are we sure?

And just to remember to finish that gifts are for using otherwise they're just wasted. I suspect we've got natural gifts that are tucked away and covered somewhere that we've long forgotten about. But the gifts of the Holy Spirit aren't meant to be treated like that. They're meant to be used to help us grow and develop, [and] also to benefit the whole church and to enable us to share Jesus and his love with those around us.

Shall we pray?

[Tony Closes his message with a prayer]

Our loving father, as we list and consider those many gifts, it's easy to be confused, easy to be unsure. But we pray that you, the Holy Spirit, will guide us, help us to give time to listening to what you're telling us.

Help us to take time with you to let those gifts develop. Not what we do, it's what we let you do through us. So that the church as a whole may benefit.

Forgive us where we've buried gifts.

Forgive us where we've ignored you.

Help us today to receive those gifts that you want to give to us and to help them to grow.

May your fruit too grow in us that we might become more like Jesus as we seek to serve him.

We pray in his name through his sacrifice that made all this possible.

Lord, may your holy spirit be alive in us we pray.

Amen.