

12 Foundation Stones—Class 2B

Gifts and Benefits

The Holy Spirit, Part 2

Section 1: The Benefits of the Holy Spirit

Let's take a little time to see how the Holy Spirit can work in your daily life.

➤ **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of love**

1 Corinthians 13:1–2—Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If the baptism of the Holy Spirit is anything, it is a baptism of love! It doesn't matter whether you "speak with the tongues of men and of angels" or you "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," if you don't have love!

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is love! This all-encompassing love of God even extends to loving people who we couldn't love merely by our own efforts, in some of the toughest situations, even "loving our enemies" like Jesus told us to do, or when you are around difficult personalities.

Luke 6:27a—But I say to you who hear: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

That baptism of power that Jesus said would flow like rivers of water from within you is a baptism of the power of His love!

John 7:38–39—"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.

In fact, the Holy Spirit of God is love, because

1 John. 4:8b—God is love.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of the love of God! Of course, it's also a baptism of the power of God, the power that enables you to tell others about Jesus, to be a witness, to share His love with others! It is a baptism of so much love that you cannot contain it, so much love that you simply must overflow on others. When you feel you've just got to tell someone about Jesus, you feel you cannot hold it in, you just have to tell them, this is the overflowing, the baptism of God's Spirit!

➤ **The Holy Spirit helps, inspires, and strengthens us**

Ephesians 3:16—That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.

John 14:16—And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.

John 16:7—Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

The candle, the wick, and the Holy Spirit

Do you know the principle of the candle? It's not really the wick that's burning—although it does finally burn a little—but it's the wax. That's why it lasts so long.

If you just burn up your own energy you won't last long! In the old days when they used to use kerosene lanterns that ran on oil, when the wick began to burn, it soon burned up just like that! But if they had plenty of oil, the wick lasted a long time because it's the oil that burns. Oil is a good parallel or illustration of the Holy Spirit.

If you do the burning, you're going to burn out fast!—But if you let the Spirit burn, you'll last a long time! If things get too rough, maybe you've been burning too much. You haven't let the Spirit do the burning.

➤ **The Holy Spirit guides us and gives us understanding of God's Word**

John 16:13—However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not

He will speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

John 14:26—But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

1 Corinthians 2:12—Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

2 Corinthians 3:6b—The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

You can read a Scripture all your life without meaning, until the Holy Spirit speaks it to you and applies it to a situation and brings it to life!

There are parts of the Bible that you can understand very clearly. There are parts of it which you can certainly apply to yourself and that have a message for you and me today and have had messages for His followers and all mankind for generations, for centuries, for millenniums. But it takes the divine guidance of the Lord to really sort this Book out right and understand exactly what it's talking about. You really need the Holy Spirit. You need the guidance of the supernatural Holy Spirit of God to guide you aright through His Word.

■ **To consider: How has the Holy Spirit brought the Word to life for you?**

➤ **The Holy Spirit enhances our relationship with the Lord**

Acts 9:31b—[The Early Church] walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Romans 8:26—Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

John 14:26—But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

The word translated as "Helper" in the above verse is translated in the King James Version as "Comforter." The original Greek word used here is *parakletos* which means "called to one's side." It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another's cause. A wider meaning is "intercessor" or "consoler." Thus, "Comforter" actually gives us a closer idea of the original meaning than "Helper."

➤ **The Holy Spirit empowers our witness to others**

Acts 1:8—But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me.

Luke 4:18—The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

The main reason for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to give you power to witness!

It's often difficult for us to express what we feel; we don't always know how to put it into words. The Holy Spirit can inspire our words and get the point across much better than we can. Our words often seem to fall far short, but the Holy Spirit can cause our words to speak deeply to others' hearts so they understand and feel the profundity of what you may so poorly be trying to express. The Holy Spirit can fill in the meaning, fill in the details that we fail to include. Like Paul said,

1 Corinthians 2:4-5—And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

If you are sincere and trying to do your best, then the Lord will bless your witness! The Holy Spirit will work regardless of how lacking or confusing your words are or how badly you do. You don't have to be afraid of making a mess of things, because whatever you say to try to share the truth of the Word, the Lord is going to bless it.

➤ **The Holy Spirit working in our lives brings results**

Galatians 5:22-23—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

If you are filled with the Spirit, obeying the Spirit, and letting the Spirit work in your life, the results will be visible. When people receive the Lord, we don't see Jesus go into their hearts. Likewise, we don't see the Holy Spirit physically come into their spirits and lives, but you can sure see the difference afterwards!—In their faces, in their eyes, their smiles, there is a visible difference!

Section 2: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In the previous class you read how the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to His first disciples and the effect it had in their lives. Now we're going to look more closely at the gifts of the Spirit and how these can make a difference in your life. Getting filled with the Spirit should bring some changes! Let's look at what they are.

➤ **The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts**

Now let's turn to 1 Corinthians 12 and see what Paul taught about the gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1—Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.

And then he goes on to explain what he's talking about.

1 Corinthians 12:4–6—There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. (6) And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Listed here are nine basic gifts of the Spirit, but there are not only nine gifts, but there are all these variations on those gifts! What are they again? "Diversities of gifts," "differences of ministries"—differences in the way in which they are given—and "diversities of activities"—differences in the way in which these gifts operate. "But it is the same God"—the same Spirit—"who works all in all."

1 Corinthians 12:7—But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

If you have Jesus and are filled with His Holy Spirit, you can experience the wonderful world of the spirit—its exciting sights, sounds, visions, voices, and even resultant physical thrills, like talking in tongues—manifestations, or gifts, of the Spirit.

Besides talking in tongues, eight other gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10:

1 Corinthians 12:8–10—For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But even these wonderful gifts of the Spirit that we now have are almost like childish toys compared to what's coming! They are just tiny gifts from a loving Father to His simple little children to help communicate understanding of Himself and His Will! They are only a sample of glorious realities to come when Jesus comes again and we shall see Him as He is and be literally like Him, face to face, actually experiencing the fullness of the realities of God, which we only have by faith now in the realm of the Spirit! Paul even said in his prediction to the Corinthians that when we see Jesus face to face, we shall put away even these childish gifts of communication in the Spirit:

1 Corinthians 13:8–10—Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (10) But when that which is perfect has come [Jesus], then that which is in part will be done away.

➤ **The gifts of the Spirit**

There are nine basic gifts of the Spirit:

The unseen gift: discernment, knowledge, wisdom

The unstoppable gift: faith.

The guiding gift: prophecy

The renewing gift: healings

The showstopper gift: miracles

The uplifting gift: tongues

The revelatory gift: interpretation of tongues

■ **The Lord chooses which gifts to give to whom.**

1 Corinthians 12:11—But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

James 1:17—Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

➤ **None of the gifts are essential as proofs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.**

The most important gifts of the Spirit are mostly quiet: knowledge, wisdom, faith, discernment, and prophecy. You can see miracles and healing and you can hear tongues. But it is these quieter gifts, some unseen, that are usually the most important for your daily service to the Lord: the knowledge that God gives you, the wisdom of how to use it, the discernment of spirits—not only evil spirits but good spirits, and your spirit—and faith to believe it, plus the gift of prophecy (hearing from God)!

Those are things you often can't see, but they're actually the most important! The other gifts are also important for you, but mostly for the sake of others, for outsiders, to help them believe.

➤ **1. Discernment**

Discernment is defined as "keenness of insight or judgment"—the ability to perceive the spirit and intent behind what others say or do. God's Word exhorts us to discern the difference between good and evil and to "test the spirits."

1 John 4:1–6—Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (4) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. (6) We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

➤ **2. Knowledge**

The spiritual gift of knowledge goes far beyond mental knowledge; it's getting a glimpse of the heart and mind of God. You know things you wouldn't otherwise know.

1 Corinthians 2:9–16—But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. (16) For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

➤ **3. Wisdom**

James 1:5—If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Proverbs 4:7—Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

Proverbs 8:1, 5–7, 11—Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? (5) O you simple ones, understand prudence, and you fools, be of an understanding heart. (6) Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; (7) For my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips (11) For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

What is wisdom?—How to use the knowledge of God! Wisdom is a wonderful gift! It's one thing to know things, that's knowledge, and that's good, that's one of the gifts of the Spirit, but it's another thing to know how to use that knowledge, and that's wisdom, another gift of the Spirit.

You may be very smart as far as facts and figures and history and even Bible knowledge, but if you don't know how to use that knowledge to help someone else or help yourself or use it for a good purpose, what good is it?

A lot also depends on what kind of knowledge you have, whether it's the knowledge of good or evil, and then, of course, it's very important how you use that knowledge. If you give some people too much knowledge without wisdom they invent horrific bombs with their knowledge, and spend billions of dollars on armaments while millions are starving to death!

➤ **4. Faith**

Hebrews 11:1, 6—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (6) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

You certainly need faith! The gift of faith is not very obvious. You can't see it; you can't tell what color it is; you can't hear it. Sometimes you can see it on people's faces in a way, and you can certainly tell by the way they act how much faith they've got.

Every born-again child of God is given a measure of faith. Our faith grows every time we read, absorb, and act upon the Word of God. But to have especially great faith for certain things is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Having the gift of faith will lead to the visible gifts of healing and miracles.

For more on faith, read Hebrews 11.

Abraham walked by faith

Romans 4:19–21—And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead [since he was about a hundred years old], and the deadness of Sarah's womb. (20) He did not waver at the promise of God [that Sarah would conceive a child] through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Humorous anecdote on faith

The minister's sermon concerned the relationship between fact and faith. "That you are sitting before me in this church," he said, "is fact. That I am standing, speaking from this pulpit, is fact. But it is only faith that makes me believe anyone is listening!"

The story of Etta

By Virginia Brandt Berg

When I was a pastor of a church in Wagoner, Oklahoma, there was a very consecrated Christian girl named Etta, who desired very much to go to Bible college and prepare for Christian service. For two years she prayed and waited for the money to come. In fact, the last year that she remained at home praying and looking for the finances to be advanced for her schooling, she got deeply in debt, and it looked as though the schooling was an absolute impossibility. She came to me weeping and much discouraged. I asked her if she knew that it was God's will for her to go, and she answered she was absolutely sure of that. Then I said, "I would certainly not wait any longer. You have been asking the Lord for the money for two years, but you have never really definitely claimed it or shown in any way by your actions that you are really expecting Him to send it. If you really believed He was going to answer your prayer and give you the funds for railroad fare, tuition, etc., what would you do?"

"I'd get my clothes ready and write the school that I was coming and make all the other arrangements preparatory to going," she answered.

"Well, then that is exactly what I would do if I really believed God heard my prayer and it was His will for me to go. I would definitely stand on His promise and go right ahead making every arrangement, just as you would do, if you had the money in hand, for real faith will proceed as if it already had the money. If someone wired you he was sending the money, you would believe that little yellow slip of paper, only a telegram, but when God Himself has wired you through His precious Word and promised you most definitely to give you the desire of your heart, you do not believe Him but act exactly as if you were saying, 'Oh, that's only the Word of God; that doesn't mean anything; I wish some man or woman would send me word they'd help me.'

"But, Mrs. Berg," the dear girl answered, "I don't feel that way about God's Word. I'll prove to you that I believe Him and trust His promises to the limit. I'm going home and pack my clothes and get ready now. School opens in a very short time, and I'll have to hurry to get ready."

And that dear girl claimed a promise from God and never wavered from that moment. She went straight ahead with her preparations, just as if she already had the funds, so positive was she that God would not fail her, and the bank of Heaven would "open its windows" (Malachi 3:10) at just the right time. If this dear girl is reading this story now, she will smile with me as memory turns back to one peculiar incident that occurred during that preparation. She called me on the phone one day, in fact the very day before she was to leave, saying that her clothing was all ready, together with her other belongings, in neat piles in her room, but that she had no trunk. Over the phone we took the Scripture promise "And He shall supply your every need, according to His riches in glory" (Philippians 4:19).

I went about my work forgetting the incident. About an hour later, Mrs. M., a friend, called me over the phone, saying they were cleaning house and amongst a number of other things there was a trunk she had no use for, that was really in the way in the closet, and she wondered if I could use it. Laughingly, I told her she was filling an order from Heaven, only she had the wrong address, and the Lord wanted the trunk sent to Etta's home.

Next night, a number of us went to the train to bid farewell to this dear girl, as she started to college. At the depot she whispered to me, "Sister Berg, the money hasn't come yet, but I am not the least bit frightened, for I absolutely know the Lord has heard my prayer and I know 'that I have the petition that I desired'" (1John.5:14–15). I will confess I was a bit distressed and thought there must have been a mistake somewhere, for the board of the church had told me they had taken up a little offering for her amongst themselves. As I was wondering about this, I heard the train whistle in the distance, and far away I saw the glow of the headlight. I noted Etta was earnestly watching my face. There was nothing to say. I could not help but wonder, but I knew that God did not dare fail such faith as hers.

Suddenly, a friend of ours, the chairman of the board at the time and a very active Christian worker, named Mr. Trollinger, came hurrying into the depot and up to us. He greeted us with these words, "I was doing some work at the office (just a couple of blocks away) when I heard the train whistle and thought of the money the men had given me to give to Etta, and here is some more, a gift from my wife and me."

"And here is some," said another voice—a friend of Mr. Trollinger who had met him hurrying to the depot.

"All aboard," called the conductor, "all aboard."

"All aboard God's promises," I said to Etta. "It pays, doesn't it?"

"It's wonderful," she answered, "simply wonderful, what faith can do."

And that is the story of one who dared to put faith into action; to proceed as if possessing; one who reckoned on the faithfulness of God.

➤ **5. Prophecy**

The gift of prophecy—that of receiving messages from the Lord—is perhaps the most important of all of the gifts of the Spirit. Paul practically puts it at the top of the list in the 14th chapter. He said:

1 Corinthians 14:3—But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

1 Corinthians 14:5—I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church [believers] may receive edification.

In prophecy you're talking in your own language, and you're relating divine inspired words that come pouring through straight from the Lord or His angels or good spirits. It's so easy you don't have to work for it; it's a gift, you just give it!

One person may prophesy very beautifully and fluently in language that's almost Biblical, while another person prophesies haltingly, slowly, and rather roughly. It's a difference in the tools, in the instruments. The Lord is the One who is giving it to both of them; it's all His inspiration. It's just that certain ones are gifted in different ways, with different strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and inabilities.

Through the gift of prophecy you receive divine guidance, which is going to become even more essential as the days of the near future grow darker.

Acts 2:17—And it shall come to pass in the Last Days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

As this is a big subject, we'll look at it in depth in later classes (4A and 4B).

The Call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:3–9—It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. (4) Then the Word of the Lord came to me, saying: (5) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." (6) Then said I: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." (7) But the Lord said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. (8) Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord. (9) Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: "Behold, I have put My Words in your mouth."

Jeremiah was born in the village of Anathoth, situated north of Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin. He was called to the prophetic ministry in the 13th year of Josiah's reign, about 627 B.C.

Jeremiah's call is one of the most instructive passages in his book. God declared that he had sanctioned him as a prophet even before he was born (Jeremiah 1:5). But the young man responded with words of inadequacy: "Ah, Lord God!" (vs. 6). These words actually mean "No, Lord God!" Jeremiah pleaded that he was a youth and that he lacked the ability to speak. But God replied that he was being called not because of age or ability but because God had chosen him.

Immediately Jeremiah saw the hand of God reaching out and touching his mouth. "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth," God declared (vs. 9). From that moment, the words of the prophet were to be the Words of God (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

Prayer and prophecy solve labor problems

(From Marie Claire, India)

A close friend of ours came to us for prayer and counsel: A labor dispute and strike threatened to destroy his business.

We prayed and received a message from Jesus in prophecy, in which the Lord promised it would all work out in His time. The Lord also had some specific counsel for our friend about learning to work more as a team with his staff, how to improve relations with his workers, and how to prepare for the future.

It took two months for our friend to finish implementing the Lord's counsel, but in due time everyone learned what they needed to, the strike ended, and things are going better now than before the problem erupted—just like Jesus said they would!

➤ **6./7. Healing and miracles**

The gifts of healing and miracles are sixth and seventh on the list. You've got to stay healthy or you're not going to serve the Lord very well. To believe that the Lord can heal is important for your own sake and the sake of your fellow believers.

It is sometimes also necessary for the sake of others. God has often used healing and miracles to get a crowd for the sake of the publicity so they can hear the message and believe. But note that God uses the gift of healing in this way because He loves and cares for people and wants them to be healed and to be drawn closer to Him. Such healings are not meant to glorify the individual to whom God has given the gift. It is a gift to be used in sincerity, humility, and love.

Miracles encourage people to believe. Miracles can be very visible. The English word "miracle" comes from the Latin word *mirari*, to wonder at. Miracles grab people's attention.

Jesus still performs miracles for and through His followers today—miracles of healing and other events. He promises,

John 14:12—Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

A healing miracle!

(From Francisco and Margarita in Mexico)

Maria had already been in a coma for over 20 days when her sister contacted us and asked us to pray for Maria. A heart attack when eight months pregnant had caused Maria to lose the baby she was carrying. Now doctors had all but given up hope for Maria to recover. Even if she came out of the coma, one of her kidneys would need to be removed. Her sister was desperate.

When we went to the hospital to pray for Maria, most of her family was there. Everyone held hands in a circle and prayed for Maria to come out of the coma and completely recover.

The next day, Maria woke up from the coma, and about a week later her doctors said she wouldn't have to have the kidney removed after all. They said that Maria's turnaround couldn't be explained medically, and that it must have been a miracle.

Now Maria is almost back to full health—yet another case of "with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

Miracle of protection!

(From Ben, USA)

There have been so many airplane crashes and near crashes in recent months that if you heard about the cargo plane that ran off the end of a Miami airport runway and exploded, chances are you didn't think much more about it. Neither did I, until my daughter phoned to say the crash was immediately in front of the computer store owned and operated by good friends of ours, and that our friends were in the store at the time!

We phoned them immediately, and visited them several days later. Earthmovers were still scooping up fuel-tainted soil when we arrived. Before telling us their amazing story, our friends read us the following excerpts from Psalm 91:

"He who dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver [me] from ... the destruction that lays waste at noonday."

The plane crashed just after noon, they explained, and slid for hundreds of feet before stopping just a few feet from their building. The plane pushed several cars up against the building, and a piece of one of the plane's engines flew through the glass door of their shop, making an escape route for the people inside. The three of them and their only customer at the time were able to squeeze through to safety. Seconds later, a large blast filled in the space along the building through which they had just made their escape.

When the fire was extinguished and they were allowed to return to the scene, they expected to find their shop gutted. They were in for a surprise.

The neighboring store was a burnt-out shell, but the only damage to our friends' place was a melted storefront sign and the broken glass door that had allowed them to get out. Just inside the door was an outgoing shipment of computer monitors, undamaged and still stacked neatly. A few feet away, next to the couch where my six-year-old had rested when we had visited our friends the evening before the crash, was a box of pants labels which had been part of the plane's cargo.

Before we left, we helped one of our friends as he painted in large letters on his boarded-up shop door: "Thank God we survived! Psalm 91." That same friend was later interviewed on several nationwide talk shows, and each time he took the opportunity to thank the Lord publicly for His protection. What a miracle!

➤ 8. Tongues

The gift of tongues is the ability to speak, pray, or praise God in one or more unlearned languages.

Acts 2:4—And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Sometimes these are earthly languages, but more often these tongues are heavenly languages which are unintelligible to the speaker or anyone else except through the gift of interpretation.

1 Corinthians 14:2—For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands

him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

■ **The gift of tongues can enhance your prayer life.**

1 Corinthians 14:14—For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

You not only need the infilling of the Holy Spirit to have the power and strength to witness to others, but also to help you in your own personal communication with the Lord. Tongues are good for the edifying of your own spirit. It is a miraculous manifestation even to yourself. It's wonderful to be set free in the Spirit! Your spirit is edified. It means your spirit is being enlightened and inspired.

Even if you don't know what you're praying for, when you pray in tongues, the Spirit prays through you. The Spirit knows what to pray for. Go ahead and let the Spirit lead!

Romans 8:26b—The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

■ **The difference between praying and praising in tongues, and receiving a message in tongues.**

There is a difference between tongues of praise which do not have to be interpreted, and messages in tongues which should be interpreted.

Tongues of praise:

1 Corinthians 4:5b—Each one's praise will come from God.

Hebrews 13:15—Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Messages in tongues:

Acts 19:6—And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

1 Corinthians 14:5—I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church [believers] may receive edification.

Most people who have the gift of tongues only pray or praise the Lord in tongues, which is wonderfully edifying for your spirit—thrilling, exciting, a miracle, the most obvious of all the gifts of the Spirit and the commonest, but the least useful for anybody but yourself!

Some people have the gift of receiving messages in tongues, which is a little more rare. The Lord gives the interpretation to them or to someone else. We'll talk more about this when we discuss interpretation.

■ **The gift of tongues is largely for your own benefit.**

It is not the most important gift, although it is perhaps the most well known.

1 Corinthians 14:19—Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:22a—Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers;

The gift of tongues is not essential, nor is it the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Not everybody receives the gift of tongues when they're filled with the Spirit, and you don't have to have the gift of tongues to prove that you were filled with the Spirit! There are eight other basic gifts; why should everyone have to receive the gift of tongues?

Lots of people receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit without necessarily speaking in tongues—although eventually, most people who have the Holy Spirit are apt to speak in tongues, too, because it's a wonderful way of praying. It's one of the commonest gifts, although mostly just for your own benefit and your own edification in the Spirit to be able to pray in tongues.

Testimonies of Receiving the Gift of Tongues

Most people who receive the gift of tongues receive a "tongue of angels" that is not a recognizable language (1 Corinthians 13:1). However in some exceptional cases, people receive the gift of an earthly language, just like in Acts chapter 2.

Estonian the easy way

Pentecost's miracle still happens today. Since the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Christians have experienced that people can suddenly speak languages which they never learned, and which can be understood by others.

Kertu Gasman and Lia Piir, two Christian women from the Baltic nation of Estonia recently told of a missionary journey to neighboring Latvia. Both women traveled as part of a team from their hometown Tallinn to Latvia in 1989, two years before Estonia's independence, to pray and evangelize. The Estonian

and Latvian languages are very different despite their geographical proximity, so Kertu and Lia had to speak Russian in order to be understood. In a prayer meeting, a Latvian girl suddenly spoke loudly in Estonian: "Lift your eyes, because your hope and Savior is coming soon." Kertu later went to the girl and told her how surprised she was that she could speak Estonian. The girl replied "Estonian? I can't speak a single word!" The Christians present, who were still suffering under a Communist regime, understood this as an encouragement from God.

"When they sang, it was Spanish!"

By Jonathan from Columbia

Years ago I was living in New York with a Christian rock band. I am from Colombia and I know Spanish and English, but none of the members of the band with whom I was living spoke a word of Spanish. They were all American and only spoke English. I had met the Lord only six months before and I was a new Christian.

The band had made several tapes of their practice sessions, as at the time they were preparing to record some songs professionally and would also do functions at youth gatherings.

One day I was doing some jobs around the house and I was listening to one of the tapes that they had recorded. A particular song had come on in which the group started singing in tongues. At first I couldn't understand what they were saying, but as the song progressed, these Americans who couldn't speak a word of Spanish started singing in beautiful poetic Spanish! I was shocked and thrilled! And they went on and on—out of their mouths came forth a beautiful message of how love will reign forever.

As a young Christian, this was a wonderful sign to me of one of the Lord's supernatural gifts of His Spirit!

➤ **9. Interpretation of tongues**

1 Corinthians 14:13–16—Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. (14) For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. (15) What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (16) Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

Sometimes tongues are meant to be understood by the Lord alone, but other times they convey messages that the Lord wants you and possibly others to understand and benefit from. The Lord can give you the interpretation of the message in tongues if you ask Him and if it is something that you are meant to understand.

An interpretation is like a prophecy. The only difference between interpreting tongues and direct prophecy is that with prophecy there's no intermediary message in tongues, you just get it straight from the Lord without the secondary step of having to get it in tongues first and then interpret.

➤ **Using God's gifts with the right motives**

The main purpose of the Spirit's gifts is to help others and ourselves to be closer to the Lord. Let's look at a few examples: A miracle can increase someone's faith. A prayer in tongues can be used by the Lord to edify our spirit. We can receive instruction via a prophecy. These are gifts from a loving heavenly Father to His children to help communicate understanding of Himself and His Will.

■ **We should not belittle or neglect the "gifts of the Spirit."**

2 Timothy 1:6—Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

1 Corinthians 12:31a—But earnestly desire the best gifts.

The gifts of the Spirit are not meant to be played with or proudly displayed or used for personal profit.

Not to be bought

Acts 8:18–21—And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

➤ **Patience!**

If you ask for a gift, the Lord will answer, but He will choose which are the most important gifts for you in your life and also the right timing to manifest those gifts. Have patience!

James 1:4—But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

➤ **Love!**

You can have all the gifts of the Spirit and all the prophecy, tongues, teaching, and everything else, but it isn't worth much unless you have love! Love is the most important thing! Look what Paul says in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 12:31–13:1—But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (13:1) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Jesus, for how You reveal Your Word to us. It takes Your Spirit to open our eyes and show us Your truth. Please help us to acknowledge You each time we read Your Word, and may Your Holy Spirit give us an understanding of what You want to tell us. Help us to stay close to You now, Lord, as we go about our way, and to carry Your Spirit with us. Amen.