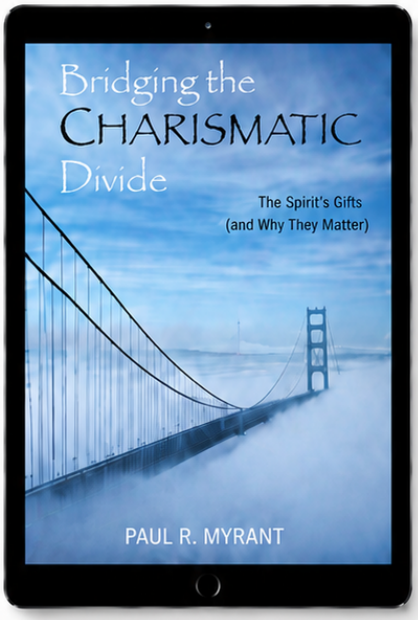
Exclusive Sampler:

Bridging the CHARISMATIC Divide

The Spirit's Gifts (and Why They Matter)

Author Paul R. Myrant explores the question: Are the spiritual gifts still active today? Some believe they have ceased, others practice them openly, and many remain unsure what to believe.

In Bridging the Charismatic Divide, Paul speaks to all three groups with clarity, balance, and lived perspective. This book is not a call to switch camps. It invites readers to examine Scripture more closely, reconsider what may have been misunderstood, and pursue unity without compromising the truth.



Bridging the Charismatic Divide

A Note from the Author

To help you get the most out of this book, I have created a free Reader Bonus Pack. This resource is designed to help you, your small group, or your church move from theory to practice. It includes:

- **The Framework and Definitions Pack:** A quick reference guide to the key terms and Word plus Spirit balance models discussed in these chapters.
- **The Study Guide:** Structured discussion questions and next steps designed for both solo readers and small groups.

Download your free Bonus Pack at:
acts17accord.com/bonus-book-reading-guide

Or scan the QR code below:

Bridging the Charismatic Divide

The Spirit's Gifts (and Why They Matter)

by
Paul Myrant

Bridging the Charismatic Divide:
The Spirit's Gifts (and Why They Matter)

Copyright © 2026 by Paul Myrant

Published by TASA Publishing. All scriptures quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version® Copyright© 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked "NIV" are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked "NASB" are taken from the New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked "KJV" are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version (Public Domain).

This book is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information regarding the subject matter covered. This information is given with the understanding that the author is not engaged in rendering legal or professional advice.

ISBN 978-1-69981-804-6

Cover and Interior Design: Just Right Productions

All rights reserved by
Paul Myrant and TASA Publishing.

Printed in the United States of America.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction ix

Chapter One
The Role of the Gifts in Redemption 1

Chapter Two
Equipping the Saints 18

Chapter Three
The Baptism of the Spirit 25

Chapter Four
The Filling of the Spirit 44

Chapter Five
How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit 65

Chapter Six
The Nature of the Gifts 77

Chapter Seven
In-the-Moment Gifts 93

Chapter Eight
Misconceptions About Healing 116

Chapter Nine
A Healing Paradigm 143

Chapter Ten
Prophets & Prophecy 167

Chapter Eleven
Prophets & the New Testament Canon 184

Chapter Twelve
The How and Why of Speaking in Tongues 207

Chapter Thirteen
Apostles 225

Chapter Fourteen
Kingdoms in Conflict 241

Appendix 1
You and Your Gifts 261

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made 264

Appendix 2
Israel and the Ecclesia 267

About the Author 273

Acknowledgments

To Jim: Your faith in this project encouragement and gentle pushes are the root of this project's completion. Thank you so much.

To Rick: It means more than I can say that you took the time to work with me on this project. Thank you for your input and friendship.

To Bob: "As iron sharpen iron, so one man sharpens another." Never have truer words been uttered as your insights helped shape the texture, flow, and final edits of the book. Thank you for your countless hours of work.

Introduction

The most famous passage in the Bible is the "Love Chapter" found in 1 Corinthians 13. This remarkable text is read aloud at weddings to rapt audiences of believers and unbelievers alike.

> *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong-doing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.*
>
> —I Corinthians 13:4-8

Paul begins this chapter with a stark challenge to those who operate in the Spirit's gifts.

> *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 13:1-3

In the context of 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul is challenging those who operate in the gifts to make love the basis for using them. Of course, love is not limited to just the use of the gifts. Love for God, the Church, which is body of Christ, and the lost must be our primary motivation for everything we do. Love must motivate our teachings, doctrine, liturgy, and favorite spiritual practices. Everything we do is to be done out of love.

Love requires that we be patient and kind with those with whom we disagree. We must not resent their apparent success or be gleeful at their failure. We must speak the truth to one another in love, believing the best for them, hoping all things go well for them, and even enduring their slights and disrespect.

Without love everything we do is empty, hollow, and meaningless. May our hearts and prayers imitate the apostle Paul who said,

> *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*
>
> —Philippians 1:9-11

After speaking so eloquently about love in I Corinthians 13, Paul abruptly inserts comments about the cessation of the gifts.

> *As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.*
>
> —I Corinthians 13:8)

Paul speaks to you and me almost as if he could see future generations of the Church fighting over the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Intentionally, the "love chapter" is sandwiched between two detailed chapters on these gifts. No Christian practice is given as much detail as tongues, prophecy, and the other seven supernatural gifts.

The irony of the placement of this verse should not be lost on us. Tongues and prophecy were as controversial in the first century church as they are today. Paul told the Thessalonians not to despise prophecies, and he spent the majority of I Corinthians 14 laying out instructions for the proper use of tongues and prophecy. So, we should not be surprised that we are still divided over these gifts. In fact, perhaps no issue divides serious believers from other serious believers more than the chasm between those who still believe in prophecies and tongues and those who do not.

Millions of believers across the globe continue to believe in and practice the supernatural gifts; equal numbers do not. Generally, a peaceful co-existence exists among these groups. Yet some members of both camps accuse the other of being non-believers or deeply deceived. John MacArthur, a well-known pastor, and author, labeled the continuationist movement as "a false church, as dangerous as any cult or heresy that has ever assaulted Christianity."[1]

MacArthur's notoriety has given much weight to his statements and has caused further divisiveness, leaving no room for discussion. One group is now evil, the other righteous. This has created an environment where unity is nearly impossible.

Other groups accuse well-known charismatic leaders of ungodly practices. They are reported to be practicing necromancy and have a Kundalini spirit; a demon often associated

1 An online article by Eddie L. Hyatt, Charisma Magazine, www.charismanews.com/opinion/41728-the-false-doctrine-behind-the-strange-fire-of-john-macarthur

with yoga, which exhibits an ecstatic state of movement and emotion. There are several videos about the Kundalini spirit on YouTube.

Continuationists are not without sin in this regard, often referring to cessationists as those who believe in doctrines of demons, in the Father Son and Holy Bible. Without question there are counterfeit gifts and spirits operating in the world, and at times they may influence members of the Church. We will spend some time examining the Scriptures that help us discern between the Holy Spirit and false spirits. There must be checks and balances, and unity, and we must obey the Bible specifically when we operate in the gifts.

> *And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.*
>
> —Luke 24:52-53)

> *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.*
>
> —Acts 1:14

Jesus prayed the Church would be unified, and Paul encouraged us to keep the unity of the faith. While this may never happen perfectly, we should seek to understand our differences and try to come to an agreement.

How divided are we?

Almost all Bible-believing Christians claim that some of the gifts are in operation today; most everyone agrees on the use of the "non-supernatural" gifts like pastoring, teaching, administering, helps, mercy, giving, etc. The conflict is over the

supernatural gifts such as healings, signs and wonders, prophecy, and tongues and whether they are still in operation.[2]

Even more perplexing is, as Christians, we are already fully invested in the supernatural. There is a God, and he is above nature and outside of nature. He exists of different substance than matter. (which is literally what supernatural means!). He created everything from nothing, and though he set up the laws of nature, he breaks them repeatedly throughout the pages of the Scriptures. And we believe the biggest miracle of all-- that God became man (born of a virgin, no less) and that he not only died and was buried, but that he rose from the dead! Clearly, we do not have a problem with the supernatural.

Certainly, we also believe that the early church experienced continual signs and wonders. From the many miracles of Jesus to the Day of Pentecost and all the way to 1 Corinthians, the body of Christ knew what it was to see the Holy Spirit heal, give prophecies and words of knowledge, and even to speak in tongues. These experiences were so common that Paul could use them as examples in the familiar "Love Passage" of 1 Corinthians 13.

Thankfully, there are signs we are less divided today than in the past. Many leaders are open to the ministry of the Spirit but are unsure what that really means or what that would look like. What cost will their congregation pay if they allow the gifts to be a part of their community?

Overall, my contention is that we are not that far apart. We all believe in the Spirit's ministry and involvement in our lives; we all believe in some of the gifts. My father received his doctorate in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, a well-

2 All gifts involve a supernatural element, but the non-supernatural, seem to be directly related to our personalities and natural gifting.

known cessationist institution. He was always a part of the cessationist community, but he walked in the filling of the Holy Spirit. Though he never identified with the charismatic community, he was led by the Spirit in many supernatural ways. I did not realize until I was pastoring myself that Dad operated on occasion in some of the supernatural gifts.

Besides that, my father was an active minister of the gospel. He did the work of an evangelist; he was a Bible teacher who trained hundreds of individuals for the ministry. If any person came to our house to do work for my parents, my father skillfully engaged them with the gospel message. No one came into our home without hearing about the love of Jesus.

Dad not only trained hundreds of men to be pastors; he was a committed church planter. He successfully planted many congregations around the country, leading many people to Christ, saving marriages, and changing lives. He did not do these things in his own power, but through reliance on the Holy Spirit and His power.

After I joined the charismatic community at age 35, we had many discussions about the gifts. At the time Dad did not believe they were all in operation, but he was disappointed with the lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit's leading and ministry in the communities he was in.

My Story

My spiritual journey began when I was saved during family devotions at age five. I clearly understood that I was a sinner and needed to know Jesus. At age eight, I remember being concerned that my friends at school did not know Jesus, and on occasions I tried to speak to them about Him.

As a family we moved a lot, and that was always difficult

for me. Around the eighth grade I became frustrated and angry. I was sullen and moody, and my attitudes toward the Lord changed; I rebelled. In the 10th grade while attending our church camp, a speaker taught out of Romans 12:1-2. He called us to dedicate our lives to ministry. I did, and my life radically changed. My personality came alive, and I shared the gospel with boldness and joy with many people. I went to Bible college with the full intention of being in pastoral ministry.

My family was part of a very conservative congregation: they believed that rock-n-roll was from the evil one and were strongly against the counterculture. As a musician who loved the Beatles and other contemporary music, I found myself rather lost and confused, not knowing where I fit in and how to reach my generation from this conservative community.

I began searching for something else. I happened to visit Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, on a Saturday evening in the middle of the Jesus Movement. There were thousands of young people there. This was the birthplace of Jesus Music, and it was so alive and invigorating. I was amazed! Hundreds of people came to Christ at the altar call. After that event, I could think of little else and wanted to be a part of what was happening.

I returned to Denver, graduated from Bible college, got married, and kept searching for something like Calvary Chapel. Eventually, I found out that they were charismatics. I was deeply disappointed and became determined to start a non-charismatic Calvary Chapel. Meanwhile, my wife, Jan, and I went to several different congregations which were quite different from the traditional Baptist churches we both grew up in.

For the first 35 years of my life, I was a cessationist. When I

was a youth pastor for a short time in Northern California, on several occasions I met for breakfast with a Pentecostal youth pastor. We spent many hours in conversation while I unsuccessfully attempted to show him the error of his doctrine and practices.

Still, by going to a series of churches, we moved closer and closer to the charismatic community. Eventually, we attended a Calvary Chapel in Denver just to see what it was really like. We loved it and wanted to be active in the congregation. About six months into our time there, the pastor spoke about the "baptism of the Spirit," and since I completely disagreed with his teaching, we left.

Over the next couple of years of continued investigation, I came to believe that the supernatural gifts were still in operation and that the Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit, while not accurate theologically, did reflect a filling of the Holy Spirit for ministry.

Jan and I returned to Calvary Chapel Denver which had now become a part of the Vineyard Movement. They had changed their view of the baptism of the Spirit as much as I had. We jumped in with both feet! I became part of the worship team, a small group, a church plant, and embraced all the aspects of a charismatic community–including operating in all the supernatural gifts. Over the years, I have seen these gifts in operation hundreds of times.

Later, we moved to California where I finished seminary and then planted a Vineyard congregation in Buena Park, California. After observing and experiencing these gifts in a charismatic community, I realized that my father and I had unknowingly operated in many of these supernatural gifts

throughout our lives. Curiously, as a Baptist, I did not see these events in our lives and ministry as spiritual gifts. Someone would occasionally be supernaturally healed, or have a dream, or give a word of knowledge or prophecy. However, I did not tie them to the Spirit's gifts until after I saw the gifts operating in the Vineyard. Toward the end of his life, my father also came to believe all the gifts were still in operation. After being a part of the charismatic community for many years, I find myself deeply grateful for the biblical and theological heritage I received from my father and my Baptist community. At the same time, I am just as grateful for the time I have spent with the charismatic community. I have grown deeply in my relationship with the Holy Spirit and have learned many things about ministry and the Scriptures.

The Challenge Before Us

Recently, I spoke to a friend who is a pastor of a cessationist congregation about this book. I told him the title, *Bridging the Charismatic Divide,* and that my goal was to try to bring the body of Christ together on this controversial subject. He immediately, and nicely, challenged my premise, questioning how we could come together on this topic. The gifts either all exist, or they do not. "How," he asked, "could there be a middle ground?"

This is the challenge I face, and my goal in writing this book is to answer that fundamental question. To be clear, I do believe all the gifts are still in operation today, including apostles, prophets, prophecy, and tongues. I have seen them in operation and know that they still function. However, I am not in full agreement with either the Pentecostal or charismatic communities. I disagree with some of the practices and teachings about the gifts in these congregations, including what they call the

"baptism of the Spirit" and their overemphasis on tongues and prophecy and emotionalism.

Another way to see this divide between cessationists and continuationists is in the emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit versus Bible teaching. Cessationists have a strong, consistent emphasis on Bible teaching and training. The P/C (Pentecostal or charismatic) community has a strong consistent emphasis on the Spirit's ministry. Both are equally important for the Church.

Operating in the gifts is a subjective process, primarily intuitive: you feel or sense the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. Teaching and Bible study are more absolute and clear-cut this is right, that is wrong. There is not much space for the subjective.

Throughout the pages of this book, I have attempted to address three foundational issues concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

First, are they still in operation today?

Second, do the gifts matter?

Third, what are they and how do they work?

If we do not answer the first issue in the affirmative, then the other questions have little need to be answered. The difficulty in discussing this topic is that we must understand the nature of the gifts and how they work to effectively answer whether they are still in operation today.

I am convinced that most of the division centers around a misunderstanding of the nature and operation of the gifts and a general mistrust of other parts of the Body. Some doctrinal divisions need to be resolved, such as the baptism and filling of the Spirit, prophecy and the canon, the role of apostles, the history of the gifts, and the proper practice and use of tongues.

Certainly, there are valid concerns about the abuses of some healing ministries. The practices of some faith healers are extra-biblical and, more importantly, some are anti-biblical.

One thing must be emphasized: using all the supernatural or what I shall explain as *in-the-moment* gifts, is not the same thing as becoming a Pentecostal or charismatic believer. The gifts do not operate because of what we call ourselves, the style of music we play, or the way we run our service. They are not connected in any way to emotional pleas or the right emotional song. Frankly, emotions can hinder the operation of the gifts; we cannot manipulate supernatural healings.

The manifestations of the Holy Spirit flow through us only when the Holy Spirit wants them to. This is what I mean by "in-the-moment." God's gifting is not something we possess to wield at will; His power is given in the moment when He desires to act. Our responsibility is to follow the Spirit's leading and be willing for Him to use us.

One of my best friends in Bible college became a Pentecostal immediately after he graduated from seminary. One day we were great friends who discussed everything (I thought); the next day he was out of my life. I did not see or have any conversations with him for over thirty years. He did not take my calls or tell me what was going on; he just left and became a Pentecostal.

The point is, I am not asking cessationists to abandon their communities or everything they stand for and join the continuationist movement; nor am I asking the same from continuationists. I am asking everyone to take another look at the nature and functionality of the Spirit's gifts and find a way to use them or use them more effectively in their respective congregations.

My goal is that cessationists might consider adding *in-the-moment* gifts to their spiritual arsenal and that continuationists consider more Bible teaching and training for their congregations. I hope that those of you who are open to the gifts being activated in your congregation will press into to this. Perhaps you will see a pathway that will allow the gifts to function in your church without bringing division.

This is an honest book; it is my story and what I have learned through many years of study and being a part of many different congregations. I hope you will take the time to carefully evaluate what I believe God has shown me over the years.

> *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*
>
> —Philippians 1:9-11

Chapter One

The Role of the Gifts in Redemption

No passage in the Bible teaches that the "supernatural" gifts of the Spirit ceased operating when the last apostle died. According to cessationists, there was an apostolic age—the time frame in which the Twelve Apostles and Paul operated in the supernatural gifts. With the death of the apostle John, this age ended. They believe that signs and wonders, including the supernatural gifts, were given to prove that the message of the apostles was from God. So, after the completion of the Scriptures the supernatural gifts were no longer needed. The cessationists use the following passage to prove their point.

> *For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 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, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles*

and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

—Heb. 2:2-4

However, this text does not say that the gifts were going to disappear when the last apostle died. Rather, the writer is touting the supremacy of Christ as the cornerstone of salvation and God's communication to the world. He is comparing the greatness of the salvation He and the apostles offered through the message of the cross in comparison to that which was offered through the Old Covenant.

While signs and wonders did verify the message of the apostles, that verification took place in the moment the miracles took place. The results were always amazing with thousands turning to Jesus. How does having the whole Bible make us need the gifts any less today or at any time in the history of the Church? How was this verification causally related to the completion of the canon?[2]

As a teenager who had just given my life to serve the Lord, I was reading 1 Corinthians 13 when I had my first encounter with a biblical passage concerning the gifts. I asked my mom what the passage meant. She taught me that these gifts disappeared when "that which was perfect came," meaning the completion of the writing of the New Testament. This idea, as well as most of the arguments against the continuation of the gifts, are arguments from silence or inference. At the very least, both the Hebrews 2 passage and 1 Corinthians 13 are unclear and subjective; neither explicitly state the gifts ceased when the Scriptures were completed.

A better interpretation than "perfect" referring to the completion of the Scriptures is the return of the Lord Jesus and our

being united with Him. "Perfect" in this passage is the same Greek word as τελειον *(teleion),* that Paul uses in Ephesians 4:13 where he speaks of the maturity (perfection) of the Body of Christ.

> *…until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature (teleion), attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* [14] *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.* [15] *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.* [16] *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*
>
> —Ephesians 4:13-16 NIV

The most healthy and mature congregations in history (at least for a short while) were the congregations at Jerusalem and Ephesus. Initially, they were both balanced communities, devoted to the Word of God, evangelism, holiness, and community, meeting each other's needs. And the gifts of the Spirit were a significant part of their growth and ministry. Their leadership structure is the model for every congregation today. These are communities everyone should strive to emulate.

I doubt anyone can or will even try to point to a time when the Body of Christ has reached maturity. When has it not been tossed back and forth by the waves? When has it ever grown to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ?

Paul further clarifies his meaning of "perfect" by saying,

> *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 Corinthians 13:12

While the Scriptures are amazing and have much to give us, their completion cannot be compared to seeing Jesus face to face. Nor do they make us know ourselves as only the Father can. That will happen when we see Him in all His glory. Then we will experience perfection, maturity, fullness and true unity in His presence.

Another argument against the continuation of the supernatural gifts uses trajectories (claiming the gifts slowly disappeared) to explain the apparent absence of the gifts after the first century.

The remaining critiques focus on how the modern use of the gifts seems to be different from how they operated in the life of Jesus, the apostles and the early church. There are concerns about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the proper use of tongues, current and personal prophecies undermining the canon, and people being led astray. All these are valid and must be addressed.

The role the gifts play today needs to be seen in the context of God's overall plan for humankind. God has always directly intervened in human history, and He did not stop doing this with the death of the last apostle or the completion of the Scriptures. We need to see the Spirit's gifts in the context of the history of redemption and the Father's plan to bring all things under Christ.

> *And He is the head of the body, (the called-out ones) the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through*

Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

—Colossians 1:18-20

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

—Ephesians 1:7-10

Seen in the context of God's plan of redemption, both the Old and New Testament teach us that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are a Major Christian Doctrine, and that they played a significant role in the lives of God's people throughout history. Moreover, they are still to play a central role in the Church today. The absence of the proper use of the gifts seriously weakens the health and function of the body of Christ and has done so throughout church history.

The division in the Church amplifies this weakness, undermining the full function of the gifts available to God's people. Unity in understanding and exercising the gifts would make us all stronger and more effective.

The purpose and function of the Spirit's gifts and filling are at the core of the Christian life, and they form a central piece to the overall spiritual, mental, and physical health of the Church.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Israel and the Church is the leadership structure. The Levitical priesthood was central to all religious functions under the Old Covenant.

Everything was run by and through this structure. It was a hierarchal structure, and only certain individuals could be a part of this elite group of leaders. They had to be part of a special tribe, wear special clothes, and had many rules about the performance of their duties. A mistake in the Holy of Holies could cost the high priest his life!

In contrast, in the body of Christ, everyone is a priest; everyone is a member of the royal family of God; and everyone has direct access to the Godhead. The Holy of Holies is now in every believer. We are indwelt, filled, and led by the Holy Spirit.

> *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
>
> —1 Peter 2:5

> *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*
>
> —1 Peter 2:9

The temple system has been replaced by the body of Christ. There is no physical temple; we are the temple of Christ, individually and collectively. In this sense, everything has changed.

> *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 3:16-17

The gifts of the Spirit were not new to New Testament believers. They had played a significant role in the lives of Old Testament

saints from Abel to Jesus. Most of the supernatural gifts were a part of the Old Testament prophetic ministry. In Israel, the gifts were primarily used by leaders, prophets, and kings. In the New Testament they are given to everyone.

—Ephesians 2:10-15

> *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; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*
>
> —Acts 2:17-18

Yet most believers do not know what their gifts are, how they work, or that God has prepared specific things for them to do. All the Spirit's gifts–not just the supernatural ones–define and give purpose to everyone in the Church.

> *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 12:7-11

The rest of Chapter 12 is about the value of each person in the

body; everyone has a gift, and every gift is equally important. This is a core difference between the Old and New Covenants.

> *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?*
>
> —I Corinthians 12:27-30

Yet somehow, the gifts seemed to vanish for most of church history. Most of the arguments against the continuation of the gifts focus on trying to figure out why the gifts seemed to disappear and justifying why they do not see the gifts in their communities. On the other hand, the Pentecostal/charismatic community is often uncritical and open to whatever seems to come in their pursuit of the gifts.

Structurally, the Church moved back toward a hierarchical system which places leaders on a high pedestal and diminishes the role of the whole body. The primary task of spiritual leaders is to prepare God's people to do the work of the ministry, to understand each member's gift and to unify and grow the congregation of Jesus.

Understanding Our Divisions

Generally, the Church sees the Holy Spirit's gifts in two categories: first, the regular, more ordinary gifts such as teaching, helps, administration, and giving; secondly, the supernatural or *in-the-moment* gifts, including healing, prophecy, miracles, and speaking in tongues.

Currently, the Church is divided into three groups concerning the use of *in-the-moment gifts.* Continuationists believe these gifts are still active in the congregation and attempt to use them. Cessationists believe they are not active and teach against their use. Finally, there are those who are open to their use but are not actively pursuing them in their congregation.

Continuationists

Continuationists believe the gifts never ceased to operate. The continuationist camp, which includes Pentecostal and charismatics, believe all the gifts are available today and focus on *in-the-moment* gifts, such as tongues, healing and prophecy. Generally, these supernatural gifts are at the center of their ministry.

Continuationists do believe the gifts were lost to the church during much of the church age. They believe they were discovered and renewed to the Church at the Azusa Street Revival in 1906. Many believe that speaking in tongues is the sign of the filling of the Spirit, some go so far as to say you cannot be a Christian if you do not speak in tongues.

Cessationists

Generally, the cessationist camp believes that the supernatural or *in-the-moment* gifts are no longer available to the Church. They emphasize the non-supernatural gifts and Bible teaching as the primary means of equipping the saints. Some cessationists avoid talking about the Spirit's ministry, lest they be marked as too charismatic.

Cessationism is the belief that the supernatural gifts were only active until the end of, or near the end of the first century, during the apostolic era. The completion of the book of Rev-

elation and the apostle John's death marked the closing of the canon and the end of this era.

> *"Cessationism is the view that the "miracle gifts" of tongues and healing have ceased—that the end of the apostolic age brought about a cessation of the miracles associated with that age. Most cessationists believe, that while God can and still does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to perform miraculous signs."*[1]

Another variation of this position proposes that the gifts did not end abruptly, but that they gradually disappeared during the last part of the first century. Since the Bible does not specifically state either of these arguments, this part of the case for cessationism is primarily an extra-biblical argument from silence. Cessationism is also based on the belief that no orthodox community has operated in the gifts since the end of the first century.

The argument that gifts are no longer in operation is used to explain the absence of continuing miracles during much of the history of the Church. However, some leaders of the Reformation as well as the Puritans, believed that the gifts were still in operation on some level. Each one had a different view about which gifts were in operation and how they worked. Over time, each of these groups moved away from their use, partially in response to Roman Catholic claims of miracles–miracles that they claimed verified their status as the true Church.

Open and Seeking

Many believers, perhaps most, find themselves uncomfortable with either position. They are open to the use of the gifts but are not sure they want to speak in tongues or be a Pentecostal.

1 www.gotquestions.org/cessationism

They pray for the sick, but often do not practice the laying on of hands. They do not reject prophesy, but they are not sure if they trust it. As a result, the Spirit's gifts are not given much attention or weight in their congregations.

The Early Church

The early church was devoted to four things which they regularly practiced. Luke recorded,

> *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*
>
> —Acts 2:42-43

The miracles were significant but were not the primary focus of the congregation. The gifts of the Spirit were to be cultivated but were never to be the central theme of the gathering.

> *All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*
>
> —Acts 2:44-47 (NIV)

There are many aspects to a healthy congregation; the operation of the spiritual gifts is only one part of that equation. A congregation must be balanced and emphasize the whole counsel of God. Supernatural power is needed to heal the sick. However, the same power is also needed to teach the Scriptures and serve one another. In a real sense, all ministries are supernatural.

Do All Believers Operate in the Spirit's Gifts?

A few weeks ago, a Facebook post from a cessationist friend told of a situation in which he was concerned about his missionary brother. He was not aware of any problem but felt led by the Lord to pray for his brother. Later, he discovered that he was praying at the exact moment his brother was in danger. He remarked that he felt his prayers were helpful to his brother. What he considered the *leading of the Lord,* the P/C community might have called a *word of knowledge*. Obviously, the information about his brother's circumstances was not in the Scriptures. Rather, it came from the Holy Spirit for *in-the-moment* assistance of a member of the body of Christ. The gifts are given to encourage the Church.

In the same way, many cessationist believers may have operated in these *in-the-moment* gifts throughout their lives. What is the difference between the leading of the Holy Spirit and one of His gifts? Are we arguing about semantics or real differences? Having experienced the Spirit in both camps, I can see no difference. Certainly, a supernatural healing through the laying on of hands is unique, but if some of the other gifts are misunderstood because of terminology or definition, there may be other reasons that supernatural healings are not regularly seen in all congregations. Just declaring that they have ceased does not adequately explain their absence.

Unfortunately, if you do not believe the gifts are in operation today, you may miss other areas in which the Spirit wants to lead you. The cessationist community has many mature believers who do not believe the *in-the-moment* gifts are in operation, and thus do not seek to actively engage in any of these gifts.

Operating in the gifts of the Spirit, does not make a person

mature in Christ, but those who are mature in Christ, should certainly be operating in the gifts. Unfortunately, many who have knowledge, maturity, and a long history with Christ, do not believe that the gifts are currently in operation. So, we must be careful not to allow the misuse of the gifts to lead to their non-use.

Why is so much time devoted to the gifts?

Have we missed something? The writers of Scriptures spend a great deal of time talking about the gifts. The apostle Paul spent several chapters on the subject, and the Gospel of Luke and Acts are filled with references to the gifts and many miracles. Besides I Corinthians, Romans, and James, the gospels and other Old Testament books contain references to spiritual gifts. The Old Testament is filled with miracles and the direct supernatural involvement of the Holy Spirit. If you consider the role the gifts play in prophetic ministry, the gifts cover a significant part of the Scriptures.

The advent of the Age of the Spirit brought the permanent indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit. Yet today, so many believe that the gifts ceased shortly after the beginning of the Church. Many modern cessationists argue that the gifts stopped functioning at the completion of the canon. If the gifts were going to be gone so soon, why spend so much valuable ink documenting their practice and regulating their behavior? It seems like a waste of time on a temporary, non-essential topic that would no longer play a role in the believer's life.

The Nature of the Gifts

The nine spiritual gifts found in I Corinthians 12:7-11 involve direct supernatural intervention by the Holy Spirit. *Prophecy,*

word of knowledge, word of wisdom, faith, healing, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and *interpreting tongues,* are simply manifestations or demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit.

God never intended for these gifts to be limited to charismatic believers, special leaders, or first century congregations. They are meant to be employed by any believer, *in the moment* of need, throughout church history. True miracles require breaking or altering the laws of nature or might include a perfectly timed natural event. As a result, an actual miracle is a concrete, irrefutable demonstration of the existence and intervention of a supernatural being. As such, miracles can be especially effective in reaching nonbelievers and encouraging the saints.

The gifts have always been here.

During my investigation into the use of the gifts, I became aware that these nine gifts, which I had generally considered only a New Testament phenomenon, were in fact present from the beginning of the world. Other than tongues and interpretation of tongues, the other seven gifts are directly associated with Old Testament prophets.

From the time of Abel forward, prophets played a central role in the life of the people of God.

> *Therefore, this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.*
>
> —Luke 11:50-51 (NIV)

The seven gifts—*prophecy*, *word of knowledge, word of wisdom, faith, healing, working of miracles,* and *discerning of spirits*—were specifically a part of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. They healed the sick, raised the dead, and had words of knowledge and wisdom along with many prophecies. Moses obviously operated in signs and wonders, and Solomon had words of wisdom on several occasions.

Even though no other prophets are specifically mentioned in connection with all seven gifts, we know that at the very least, they all operated in the gift of prophecy. Likely, they had words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and discerning of spirits as well. These gifts are central pieces of prophetic ministry and play a direct role in the office of a prophet. Just because the authors of the Scriptures do not explicitly mention other prophets using these gifts, it seems shortsighted to believe that none of the other Old Testament prophets used them. The same argument can be applied to New Testament congregations where Paul does not explicitly mention the gifts. If the Corinthians and Romans were operating in these gifts, so were the congregations in every city where a church was planted.

Prophets played a significant role among God's people before national Israel existed, and an even greater role when they became a nation. This role grew exponentially with the advent of John the Baptist and the coming of the Messiah and His disciples. Many prophecies, miracles, signs and wonders, healings, and deliverances, took place before Pentecost. This period was a part of the Old Covenant, not the New.

The Church was founded on signs and wonders done through the apostles, prophets, and other members of the congregation. Since Paul said he wanted everyone to pray in

tongues and prophesy, why would these gifts cease less than 30 years later?

Why the Gifts Matter

Finally, we need to ask why the gifts matter, what is the point of the gifts, and are they even worth discussing? To begin using the gifts will not be an easy transition for people who have previously never done so. It will not happen without some resistance from both the congregation and the enemy. However, in the long run I believe it will be worth it. There are five reasons the gifts are worth pursuing in your congregation.

First, the Scriptures teach that these gifts were given to the body of Christ, and we should obey the Scriptures and emulate the first century church.

Second, operating in these gifts promotes a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit. To use these gifts, you must be listening to the Spirit and submitting to His leading in your life. You are not just seeking the gifts, but a deeper level of communication with the Father.

Third, people we know and love, both in and outside of the Church, need to be encouraged, physically and emotionally healed, and built up in their faith. When these gifts are functioning, they can have a significant impact on the recipients.

Fourth, learning to use these gifts will cause more members of our congregations to be engaged in ministry. People need to have a part, a role; they need to do more than be a part of an audience. Paul wanted everyone to be engaged when the congregation gathered.

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you

> *come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.*
>
> —1 Cor. 14:26 (NIV)

Fifth, we know that signs and wonders and healings have a great impact on the spiritual realm. In Acts 9, two events led to the conversion of many people. When the paralytic is healed in Acts 9:33-35, the whole town turns to the Lord. When Dorcas is raised from the dead in Acts 9:36-42, many more come to know Jesus. The same kinds of effects are seen in Ephesus, where many are born again and delivered from demons (Acts 19:10-20).

Under all the hoopla, our differences are not that great, and if we will dialogue, we may reach an unexpected consensus. For the Church to survive and thrive in the days to come, we must understand and operate under the leadership and direction of the Holy Spirit. We must try to bridge the charismatic divide. Moving forward we must:

Remember the mission.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19)

Remember our job.
To equip the saints for the work of ministry. (Ephesians 4:12)

Remember the means.
Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. (Zechariah 4:6)

Chapter Two

Equipping the Saints

For as long as I can remember, I have had a deep love for the body of Christ and a passion for the lost. I long to see the community of saints walking in maturity and in the power of the Holy Spirit. I long for individuals and nations to come home to the Father.

The Day of the Lord is near and there is an urgency to fulfill the Mission of the Church. Consider what Jesus said:

> *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.*
>
> —John 9:4

Recently, I sensed the Holy Spirit saying,

> *"You are living in the waning hours of daylight, on the eve of destruction; you must work, for the night is coming when no one can work."*

The Mission of the Church

The Lord Jesus has clearly stated that our mission is to make disciples of all nations.

> *Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*
>
> —Matthew 28:19-20

The Purpose of the Church

God's plan or purpose is to bring Jew and Gentile together in Christ, uniting humanity in one body.

> *…to make known the mystery of Christ. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*
>
> —Ephesians 3:5-6

> *…and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*
>
> —Ephesians 3:9-10

The gospel message, the good news, is a message of unity, hope, and peace. In Jesus we will fulfill the reason God created us. Our destiny is to know and be known by the Creator, living in the unity found in Christ. When the apostle Paul spoke to the Athenians, he clarified the unity of humanity–that we are a sin-

gle race. Culture, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and residence may divide us, but we remain one human race.

> *And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.*
>
> —Acts 17:26

People clamor for world peace, but peace only comes through the cross, and all things will culminate in Jesus:

> *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
>
> —Philippians 2:9-11

The task of leaders Is to equip the saints.

The primary duty of every leader is to equip the saints to fulfill the works God ordained for them to do. Jesus has given His body servant leaders we are to follow. The goal of every leader should be to build a mature, effective congregation: disciples making disciples. While primary pastoral duties center around equipping the saints, pastors and congregational leaders must not lose sight of a personal and corporate outreach ministry. Evangelism and ministry outside the four walls of the assembly not only develops disciples but keeps the faith of the pastors and congregation alive and in touch with those who need Jesus.

How are the saints equipped?

Leaders equip the saints primarily through teaching, Bible training, personal interaction, and living a godly life before the congregation. Paul emphasizes the role the Scriptures play

in equipping the saints. He also tells us what it means to be equipped.

> *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 Timothy 3:16-17

Our goal should be that every believer knows what to do and how to respond in any situation they face–at home, at work, and in the community of saints. Along with teaching and Bible training, everyone needs to understand the crucial role that the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit play in their community.

Bible teaching, training, and walking in the gifts of the Spirit are all part of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives. Everything must be done through the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Miracles obviously require the power of the Holy Spirit, but so does every other part of the Christian life. We are not to teach the Bible, for example, in our own strength and wisdom, but by the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

What does an equipped church look like?

A congregation of believers dependent on and fueled by the Holy Spirit will look like the church described in the Scriptures. They will:

Preach the gospel with boldness and power.

Jesus commissioned His followers to *"make disciples of all nations,"* [Matthew 28:19] and Paul *"preach*[ed] *to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ."* [Ephesians 3:8 (NIV)] Believers were *"all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."* [Acts 4:31b] Paul and his fellow

ministry partners recognized that the *"gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."* [I Thessalonians 1:5b] Paul never attributed his success to his intelligence or clever methods but plainly stated,

> *My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 2:4-5

Do good deeds.

Jesus instructed His disciples, *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* [Matthew 5:16 (NIV)] The apostle Peter exhorted the believers to *"live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."* [1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)]

The writer of Hebrews urged us to *"consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."* [Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)] Paul told the young pastor, Timothy, to *"instruct those who are rich in the present age. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."* [1 Timothy 6:18 (NIV)]

Practice evangelism.

> *Do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*
>
> —2 Timothy 4:5

Evangelism comes from a passion to reach those who have not heard or obeyed the good news of the Gospel. This is the heart

or gift of an evangelist. However, Paul challenged Timothy, the pastor of a large congregation to act like an evangelist, he did not want his faith and ministry to be focused solely on his congregation, but on outreach to the lost as well. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and learn to share the gospel with boldness as we are given opportunity.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the only way to fulfill the mission of the Church.

A faithful, growing congregation needs to understand and engage with the Holy Spirit's ministry and the operation of His gifts. Pastors are charged with teaching and training their congregations on how to engage in ministry through the filling of the Spirit. The apostle Paul makes it clear that everyone has a job or jobs to do; there's work to be done, a ministry that the Father prepared for us long ago. He has given us gifts to use and a role in the making of disciples.

> *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
>
> —Ephesians 2:10

> *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)

> *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 12:7

> *What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you*

come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

—1 Corinthians 14:26 (NIV)

Hopefully, those of you who believe the gifts are no longer in operation will read on. I hope you will seriously consider the arguments laid out for the continuation and use of all the gifts. Even if you do not agree with the use of all the gifts, everyone should recognize the necessity of the Holy Spirit's ministry to accomplish the mission of the Church.

All that we do for Christ and our relationship with the Godhead, are the result of the Holy Spirit's ministry. We are filled, led, encouraged, strengthened, placed into Christ's body, born again, justified, sanctified, and renewed by the Holy Spirit. He is the primary, direct contact we have with the Godhead.

Yes, Christ does richly dwell within us, and all that we do is to glorify and honor the Son, and everything the Holy Spirit does, points us to Jesus. However, we are not indwelt by the Son, but by the Spirit. Jesus dwells in us primarily through the unity of the Godhead: if one is in us, so are the others.

We love Jesus and the Father, and rightfully so, but we need to acknowledge this central role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. It is imperative that we develop and grow in that relationship. The fruit of the Spirit as well as an effective, empowered ministry come from knowing and obeying the Spirit's direction in our lives.

Chapter Three

The Baptism of the Spirit

Confusion and disagreement over the" baptism of the Spirit" keeps some cessationists from believing the gifts are in operation today. From a cessationist's perspective, the Spirit's baptism is a clear, major biblical doctrine and they believe the P/C community is in error. Many are open to some of the gifts but have difficulty getting past this issue.

The baptism, indwelling, filling, and empowering of the Spirit all describe aspects of our relationship with the Holy Spirit. What is meant by the baptism and filling of the Spirit? Are they one and the same or two separate doctrines? Is the baptism of the Spirit the empowering of the Church, a special event that allows some believers to speak in tongues and operate in the *in-the-moment* gifts, or is it the doctrinal understanding of how we obtain membership in the body of Christ?

Continuationists and cessationists see this very differently. In practical terms, continuationists see the events of Acts 2 as an experience, whereas cessationists see it as theology. Ironically,

both are partially correct. What each group believes reflects both practical and doctrinal realities.

A View from the Continuationist Camp

Continuationists believe that the baptism of the Spirit is a special experience that certain members of the Church have received. It takes place after conversion and is evidenced by speaking in tongues and prophesying. Some believe it is the receiving of the Holy Spirit as well. The Assemblies of God doctrinal statement says:

> *The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a vital experience of the Christian life. It is a special work of the Spirit beyond salvation. On the Day of Pentecost, disciples who had already made a decision to follow Jesus 'were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues' (Acts 2:4). Paul asked Ephesian disciples if they had received the Holy Spirit, after which 'the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues' (Acts 19:6) … New Testament believers were constantly challenged to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; Ephesians 5:18). The Assemblies of God is committed to the baptism in the Holy Spirit because the experience is such an important focus of New Testament Christianity.*[2]

Part of the confusion with the Spirit's baptism is that the Assemblies of God use the terms *baptism of the Spirit* and the *filling of the Spirit* interchangeably, they believe:

> *The baptism in the Holy Spirit provides the believer with an empowering for witness and to live a life pleasing to God. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special expe-*

2 http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/gendoct_02_baptismhs.cfm

rience following salvation that empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in new testament times.

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts, and their uses in the work of the ministry.[3]

A View from the Cessationists Camp

Cessationists believe the baptism of the Spirit takes place at conversion when we receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and are baptized into the body of Christ. They reject a second work of grace or receiving the Holy Spirit after conversion. They do believe in the filling of the Holy Spirit, but it is not generally associated with the gifts or empowering of the Spirit.

The cessationists' emphasis in the Christian life centers more on biblical teaching and developing the fruit of the Spirit. Cessationists believe that the supernatural gifts—prophecy healing, and tongues—ceased when the canon (the Old and New Testament) were completed. John Macarthur explains this view:

Yet these early apostles and believers were told to wait, showing the change that came in the church age. They were in the transitional period associated with the birth of the Church. In the present age, baptism by Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit takes place for all

3 http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/gendoct_02_baptismhs.cfm

believers at conversion. At that moment, every believer is placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). At that point, the Spirit also takes up His permanent residency in the converted person's soul, so there is no such thing as a Christian who does not yet have the Holy Spirit.[4]

—Romans 8:9; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Cessationists see the Day of Pentecost as a historical event rather than an ongoing part of the life of the Church. Pentecost was a summing up and completion of all that Jesus did and accomplished on earth. Dr. Richard Gaffin, a noted cessationist, portrays it this way:

"In theological terms, the phrase 'history of salvation' or 'historia salutis' refers to events that are part of Christ's once-for-all accomplishment of His work of earning our salvation. The events in the history of salvation (such as Christ's death and resurrection) are finished, nonrepeatable events that have importance for all of God's people for all time. But the phrase 'order of salvation' or 'ordo salutis' refers to events in the continuing application of Christ's work … when individual believers appropriate Christ's work in their own lives; those experiences are part of the 'order of salvation.' Pentecost belongs to the history of salvation, not to the order of salvation.[5]

Pentecost is climactic and final there is nothing 'second' about it. In other words, the primary significance of Pentecost is redemptive-historical and Christological, not experiential."

---

4 http://www.gty.org/resources/bible-qna/BQ062512/is-spirit-baptism-a-onetime-event

5 www.gty.org/resources/bible-qna/BQ062512/is-spirit-baptism-a-onetime-event, 31

What this means is that the baptism of the Spirit concerns salvation, not a special experience for some believers. To understand the significance of the baptism of the Spirit, we need to have at least a minimal understanding of the differences between Israel and the Church.

The Distinction Between Israel and the Church

Both Israel and the community of Christ are nations. Israel is both a physical and a spiritual nation, but the Church is only a spiritual nation. Being a member of the physical nation of Israel does not guarantee membership into the spiritual community. Likewise, being a member of a religious organization—Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, or Pentecostal—does not guarantee membership into the spiritual community of the Church, the body of Christ.

> *For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are His descendants, are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.*
>
> —Romans 9:6-8

Both the body of Christ and spiritual Israel have represented the kingdom of God on earth. Both are composed of individuals who are a part of the family of God. Membership in either spiritual community is always obtained through repentance and faith in the Messiah, Jesus.

The body of Christ shares many common beliefs with spiritual Israel: the Father, the coming of the Messiah, the Holy

Spirit, the supernatural creation of the universe and all living things, the Old Testament Scriptures, the nature of God, the sacrificial system, repentance and faith in the Messiah, eternal life, the gifts of the Spirit, the filling of the Spirit, the restoration of national Israel, Sabbath or Sunday worship, and the feasts.

Spiritual Israel may not have understood the deity of the Messiah. They were monotheistic, and the trinity was and remains a hard concept for them to embrace. They would not necessarily have rejected His deity, but once the full revelation of the New Testament was understood, they would have accepted His deity. Contemporary Messianic Jews accept the deity of the Messiah.

Additionally, physical Israel has not been forsaken, nor the covenants abandoned by God. National Israel will be redeemed and given the land. The new Ecclesia has not replaced national Israel. The new birth was always necessary to be included in the eternal family of God. None of this negates the promises made to national Israel.

The apostle Paul recites these commonalties:

> *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised. Amen.*
>
> —Romans 9:2-5

Certain areas of disagreement exist, but in general these funda-

mental truths are shared by both. Contemporary terminology uses "continuity verse discontinuity" to describe the differences between the old and New Testaments.

The Ecclesia

From here on you will notice that I, on occasion, will use the Greek word *Ecclesia* to refer to the Church. This is meant to reflect the value and role each believer has in the gathering of the saints. The Greek word *Ecclesia,* (Church) in most modern versions of the New Testament, specifically means the "assembly" or "gathering of called-out ones." A secular use of Ecclesia referred to the City Council of Ephesus, a specific group of individuals who ran the city. Each individual member of the council would have had a part in the running of the government.

On the other hand, the closest Greek word to the English word "church" comes from κυριακοσις *(kuriakos),* meaning "of the Lord, or belonging to the Lord." In Revelation 1:10, John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's *(kuriakos)* day."

Our word for church comes from an old English word "circe" which became "chirche," then "church." Church has supplanted "assembly" or "congregations" to describe the gathering of congregants.

In our world today, the word "church" has a variety of definitions. Some of them are negative and remind people of events in history when the Church was persecuting non-believers or when Christian nations were at war with one another. Even today the modern image of the building on the corner does not adequately reflect a community of called-out ones.

Church gatherings are generally a place we go to sit and reflect on God as specialized individuals entertain us and

instruct us with music and teaching. Everyone else spectates like members of an audience. Instead, the Ecclesia should be the gathering of its members, each with spiritual gifts that allow them to be active participants in the full functioning of the congregation.

The Ecclesia is much more than a body that merely belongs to the Lord. We are a congregation of called-out ones, a spiritual nation, the community of God on the earth. The universal body of Christ is comprised of all the local congregations around the world. It includes all believers from the Day of Pentecost until now. They operate under the authority of Christ and the Holy Spirit and are to be led by individuals whom the Lord has chosen.

Local congregations are led by pastors, bishops & elders appointed to this office. These leaders must meet the minimum qualifications the apostle Paul gave in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

They must be the husband of one wife, respected in the community, able to teach, and keep their children under control. They may operate in any of the five-fold gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11, or they may have the gifts of leadership or governing. The key point is that they must meet the given criteria and are appointed to this position regardless of their permanent spiritual gift.

On the other hand, apostles, prophets, and evangelists are given primarily to the universal body of Christ, though they can and do serve in local congregations.

The Ecclesia is a spiritual nation, and citizenship in this nation has nothing to do with nationality, geography, culture, age, or gender. It is based solely on a personal relationship with

God, through repentance and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus who provided atonement for our sins.

> *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
>
> —1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV)

What is the baptism of the Spirit?

The baptism of the Spirit is the mystical event that places every believer (the Old Testament saints alive at the time of Pentecost, and everyone born again since) into the body of Christ. The Ecclesia, while deeply connected to Israel, is a new, separate entity from them. Anyone who was converted at and after Pentecost experiences the baptism of the Spirit the moment they believe.

> *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*
>
> —1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)

This union takes place in the spirit realm. Just as Israel was baptized into Moses, the Ecclesia is baptized into Christ. After Pentecost, when the Old Testament saints were converted, they were transferred from Israel into the body of Christ:

> *For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers,*

and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

—1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (NIV)

Paul makes it clear that salvation is immediately followed by the baptism of the Spirit and His indwelling: we are all made to drink of the Spirit. At Pentecost and thereafter, new converts and Old Testament saints who accepted the gospel message received the indwelling, sealing, and filling of the Holy Spirit the moment they responded to the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

—Ephesians 1:8-9, 13-14

Paul reaffirms this:

Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but

are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ … And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you … For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God … And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

—Romans 8:8b-9, 11, 14-16 (NIV)

The Ecclesia began with 120 disciples including the twelve apostles. These individuals had already been born again, knew Jesus personally, and had been following Him for three years. They had been empowered by the Holy Spirit on several occasions. The baptism of the Spirit that took place at Pentecost placed the 120 into the body of Christ. The 3,000 new believers who were converted at Pentecost also received the baptism of the Spirit. Everyone who has been saved from Pentecost onward has experienced conversion and the baptism of the Spirit the moment they believed.

The Transition Period from Israel to the Ecclesia

The transition from national Israel to the Ecclesia was not expected by the Jewish believers, including the apostles. Because the groups had so many beliefs and values in common, there was a bit of confusion at the beginning of the Ecclesia. The apostles and the 120 in the Upper Room were not aware that the Ecclesia was beginning; they were waiting for the kingdom to come. They considered themselves Jewish believers, and they were not called *Christians* until Antioch.

Just before Pentecost, when the disciples were still looking for the physical Jewish kingdom, they asked Jesus the following question:

> *"Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*
>
> —Acts 1: 6-8 (NIV)

It was not until years later that the full revelation concerning the body of Christ was known and understood. Most of this revelation came through the apostle Paul. Paul taught that the body of Christ was a new community, separate and distinct from Israel. However, he said that Israel was to be part of this Ecclesia or congregation of saints. Paul wrote:

> *In reading this, then you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus … His intent was that now, through the Ecclesia, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*
>
> —Ephesians 3:4-6, 10

The Giving of the Spirit During the Transition

In the months following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was received

in different ways by different groups. Paul asked the disciples of John the Baptist, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). John's disciples were Old Testament saints who had not been baptized into Christ. They were about to receive the fullness of their salvation. To help them, Paul gave them further instructions about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He baptized them, laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit, including His baptism and indwelling. Additionally, the Holy Spirit came on them, filling them; they spoke in tongues and prophesied as an outward demonstration of their receiving the Holy Spirit.

> *They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So, Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"*
>
> *"John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.*
>
> —Acts 19:2-6 (NIV)

When they believed, they were baptized into Christ and the Spirit came on them; then they were filled with the Spirit. The implication is that these events, while sequential, were also almost instantaneous.

The Gentiles in Acts 10

In Acts 10 the Gentiles had a similar experience to the 120, but in a different order. Peter reluctantly accepted the Gentiles as a part of this new community only after receiving three visions

and after witnessing the Holy Spirit interrupt his message, enabling them to speak in tongues.

> *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So, he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*
>
> —Acts 10:44-48 (NIV)

The Samaritans in Acts 8

The Samaritans' experience was different than the other groups. They believed, were born again, and were baptized in water. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, they would have received the baptism of the Spirit and become a part of the Ecclesia at the point of conversion. This would not have been understood until after Paul wrote about the salvation process and clarified what the baptism of the Spirit was. No one understood it at the time, and many misunderstand it today.

> *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed, or lame were healed. So, there was great joy in that city … When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.*

> *When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*
>
> —Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 (NIV)

In this situation, it was necessary for the apostles themselves to release the Holy Spirit. It was as if they were giving a stamp of approval for the inclusion of the Samaritans into the Ecclesia. We do not know if they spoke in tongues or prophesied. However, a good assumption is that they did. They obviously experienced an outward demonstration of their salvation. When Simon saw what took place, he offered money to buy the power that he had witnessed.

New Believers at Pentecost

Did the new believers at Pentecost continue to speak in tongues and prophesy? Luke is silent about their experience after that day. Certainly, they would have been a part of those who…

> *…devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with*

all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:42-47

These are examples of the transition from Israel to the Church. Theologically, we know they all experienced the baptism of the Spirit and were placed into the body of Christ, even if it was not accompanied by speaking in tongues or prophesying.

One can reasonably assume they all experienced the filling of the Spirit and most likely spoke in tongues and prophesied. However, from Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:13, we know that the baptism of the Spirit was the constant. After Pentecost, all new believers were baptized into the body of Christ at their conversion. When Old Testament saints encountered the gospel and trusted in Jesus, they were also baptized in the Spirit; they were transferred from Moses to Jesus.

A Final Point

These passages illustrate the progressive revelation about the mystery of Christ. Spiritual Israel is in, Gentiles are in, and even the Samaritans are equal members of the people of God. What was difficult for Israel was this radical belief that we are all equals, receiving the same gifts and communion with the Godhead. That was unheard of before Pentecost and the establishment of the Ecclesia.

I must be clear that this is not replacement theology, God is not done with Israel and a remnant will be restored nationally. However, spiritually all will be in Christ. Peter's initial reaction to the vision of clean and unclean things showed his own bias and hesitation to accept the Gentiles into the Ecclesia. A special demonstration by the Holy Spirit was necessary to prove to the

Jewish believers that these groups were now to be included in the community of faith.

Filling and Empowering by the Spirit

The beginning of the Ecclesia only happened once, but today new members join and are immediately baptized into the body of Christ. The filling of the Spirit was not limited to the initial experience at Pentecost. On three different occasions, the 120 who gathered in Acts 2 experienced the filling of the Spirit again:

> *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.*
>
> —Acts 2:4

> *Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to the...*
>
> —Acts 4:8

> *…and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*
>
> —Acts 4:31 (NASB)

The Bible records Peter being filled three times and the rest of the 120 being filled twice. The first time they spoke in tongues and Peter preached. The second time Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin and the Ecclesia was filled with boldness to share the gospel.

Most, if not all of the 120 disciples in the upper room, had experienced the filling of the Spirit before Pentecost. Jesus sent out the Twelve first and the 72 later during His ministry *(see Luke 10)*. Both groups healed the sick and cast out demons. They did not do this in their own power, but through the gifts and filling of the Spirit. The only difference in the Acts 2 filling was its scope and its association with the establishment of the

Ecclesia. However, it had many of the same effects as the earlier fillings. The point is not that we can be filled on several occasions, but that the filling of the Spirit is to be a normal part of our lives in Christ.

Summary

There are three truths about the Day of Pentecost. First, God established the Ecclesia, the body of Christ—a congregation that will bring Jew and Gentile together in one community. The community of Jesus will bring all nations, tribes, and tongues together into one people. It will usher in the end of this age and introduce the reign of Christ.

The baptism of the Spirit places all believers into the body of Christ. The 120 Old Testament saints at Pentecost became the first members of this new Ecclesia. They were transferred from Israel into the body of Christ. From that day forward, every new believer is baptized and placed into the body of Christ at conversion.

Second, a unique empowering of the Holy Spirit was used to bring salvation to thousands of people at one time. This event would be repeated many times over as the body of Christ expanded rapidly across the Roman Empire. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost continues to this day. There have been long seasons of drought throughout our history, but certainly we need that same power today.

Finally, Pentecost marked a new era of relationship with the Holy Spirit. Every member of the Ecclesia has direct contact with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. Everyone is to live a Spirit-filled life and to be active in the service of the Lord. We have the freedom and responsibility to interact with the Holy Spirit in all aspects of our lives. The Spirit indwells,

seals, fills, empowers, and intercedes for us. The gifts are His manifestations. He is a person; we can grieve and quench Him. We are instructed to always pray in the Spirit.

Continue Reading the Full Book

Bridging the CHARISMATIC Divide

The Spirit's Gifts (and Why They Matter)



View the Book on Amazon

Choose Kindle, Paperback, Kindle Unlimited, or Audible

Paul R. Myrant | Acts 17 Accord

About the Author



Paul R. Myrant is a Christian author, Bible teacher, pastor and church planter with more than 45 years of pastoral ministry and a lifelong dedication to Scripture, evangelism, discipleship and Christian teaching. Shaped from an early age by a home centered on biblical truth, he has spent his life studying God's Word and equipping others through preaching, apologetics, pastoral ministry and church leadership.

He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in New Testament, Bible, theology and ministry studies. Paul writes with a passion to help people come to faith, grow in spiritual maturity, and understand who they are in Christ. His work reflects a deep commitment to biblical truth, spiritual formation, and unity within the body of Christ.

Connect with Paul:

YouTube: @theacts17accord
Facebook: @acts17accord
Instagram: @acts17accord
X (Twitter): @acts17accord