
Gift, Gifts, Fruit

by Frank Bateman Stanger

I invite your attention to a passage found in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verses 16 through 25.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit. Amen.

I want us to understand the difference between Gift, gifts, and fruit in relation to the redemptive ministry of the Holy Spirit in general, and in relation to the Spirit-filled life in particular.

Gift

I begin with the *Gift* — I always capitalize it — of the Holy Spirit. On that first Day of Pentecost Peter, in his sermon to the multitude who had gathered in Jerusalem, declared: "You shall receive the gift

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of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Five verses earlier in the Scripture account Peter had spoken of the coming of the Holy Spirit in His fullness as the divine promise (Acts 2:33).

The Gift of the Spirit is God’s offer of the fullness of the Holy Spirit to the Christian believer. Christ had promised it: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him?” (Lk. 11:13). “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high” (Lk. 24:49). “You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

The Day of Pentecost, recorded in the second chapter of Acts, became the dramatic occasion of the first Christian believers’ receiving the Gift of the Spirit. In the previous message the outward phenomena of Pentecost were mentioned: the sound of a rushing, mighty wind; the tongues of fire; the ability to communicate in unknown languages. But these were only the scaffolding of Pentecost. The scaffolding was taken down after the abiding spiritual principle was established. It is the content of the Gift of the Spirit that matters — God’s offer of Himself to every believer in the fullness of the Spirit.

Many persons do not understand the reason for the Wesleyan emphasis upon receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit as a “second definite work of grace.” Let me share some insights which may be helpful at this point. The Wesleyan emphasis upon a second work of grace is modeled after the experience of the early disciples. They were converted before the Day of Pentecost. On the Day of Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Wesleyans believe that two definite works of grace are needed for several reasons. First, the two-fold nature of sin needs to be dealt with redemptively. Sin is both outward acts and inward nature. Initial salvation provides justification in relation to sins already committed and regeneration in effecting a new life of righteous conduct. Entire sanctification provides inner cleansing, thus dealing with the sin-nature.

In the second place, the person seeking initial salvation is not aware of any need of a subsequent deeper experience of grace at that time. He craves forgiveness: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” It is only after receiving forgiveness that the believer senses the inward struggle with the inherited sinful nature.

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Third, the person seeking initial salvation cannot meet the conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit in His fullness. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and is capable of only confession. But the “born-again Christian” is able to present himself/herself as a “living sacrifice” unto God, which spiritual act signifies total receptivity to the baptism of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the ministry of the Holy Spirit has a different redemptive focus in each of the two spiritual experiences of initial salvation and entire sanctification. In initial salvation the Holy Spirit performs a regenerating ministry. In entire sanctification the Holy Spirit effects a purifying work.

Many persons also raise the question, what does the fullness of the Spirit do for a Christian which regeneration has not already accomplished? Here again the early Christians are our model. There were radical transformations in their spirit and lives after the Day of Pentecost.

Look at them corporately, first of all. At the time of the crucifixion of Jesus they went into hiding. They were behind closed doors because they were afraid. But after the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost, everything was changed. No longer were they afraid to witness to their Lord. He was alive — and so were they! They went everywhere preaching the Gospel. They were filled with boldness. They even counted it a privilege to suffer for their faith.

Now look at Peter who again is representative of the others. He denied his Lord three times. He was in hiding. He had trouble believing that Christ was risen from the dead. In his frustration he was tempted to return to his old vocation of being a fisherman. But something happened to Peter on the Day of Pentecost. He stood straight on that day and proclaimed the Gospel of a crucified and risen Lord in the face of hostile Jews to a mighty multitude. Fear and cowardice had vanished from Peter’s life. He followed his Master faithfully all the way to his own cross. Perhaps as tradition says, he was crucified head downward.

What difference does Pentecost make to the Christian? The fullness of the Holy Spirit adds two dimensions to the believer’s life: purity and power.

Purity is the cleansing of the heart from inner conflict, inner division, inner unrighteousness. It is the crucifixion of the carnal nature, the destruction of that self-centeredness which binds the self to evil inclinations. Purity makes possible the growth of posi-

tive emotions. Purity provides the single-mindedness of love. I like what Esther Angel wrote in our student newspaper the other day: "Sanctification and holiness give us a singleness of focus."

Perhaps purity is better experienced than described. I remember the young person who rose from the altar rail one evening and taking me by the hand confidently testified, "Now I feel so clean." How well we know it when we are clean inwardly. How agonizingly we struggle inwardly when we are not.

But there is also the added dimension of power which the baptism of the Spirit provides. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." It is so easy to misunderstand the meaning of spiritual power. Our generation is so sensate and demands sensational and so-called "miraculous" displays of power.

But spiritual power really means adequacy. The person who is Spirit-filled is made adequate by the Holy Spirit to be and become and do what God intends. We need power for holy living, day by day. We need power for spiritual maturity. We need power to minister effectively in the place where God has placed us.

We are prone to think of highly visible personages, such as Billy Graham or Oral Roberts or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the leaders of our particular denominations, as those who are the truest representatives of Spirit-empowered persons. But this is a totally inadequate conception. The housewife in the home, the administrator in the office, the teacher in the classroom, the student at school, the pastor in the inner city or on a three-point rural charge may manifest the power of God just as truly as the one who preaches to hundreds of thousands or who administers the affairs of an ecclesiastical body. The definition of spiritual power is not to be found primarily in what a person does but rather in the fact that he/she is able to fulfill what God assigns.

The power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for each of us to (1) witness to Jesus Christ, (2) be united with one another in love, (3) be spiritually creative, and (4) live in spite of. Power is an energy which forces a way through to a new level of achievement.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit is for every Christian believer. How, then, does the Christian receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness? Let me suggest five steps.

- 1) Believe Christ's imperative and Christ's promise about

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the Holy Spirit.

- 2) Confess your need of the inward purity and power which the Holy Spirit provides.
- 3) Make a total surrender of yourself. Invite the Holy Spirit to come into every part of your being — into your mind, your emotions, your spirit, your soul, your body, your nerves, all your bodily processes — into all of you.
- 4) In response to your total surrender, accept by faith what the Holy Spirit wants to do for you.
- 5) Enter into an abiding covenant of obedience with your Lord. Say, “Now all of me, Lord is yours, *forever*.”

I knelt as a high school sophomore at an altar rail in a small Methodist Church in southern New Jersey. I was seeking the fullness of the Spirit. That evening, actually in my mind, I laid two bundles upon the altar rail. I can see them now. One was a small bundle and it bore the label “all that I know.” Even though a sophomore in high school, I really did not know much. The other bundle was labeled “all that I do not know.” It was so big that I wondered if it would fit in under the ceiling of the church sanctuary. I realized that night that I was giving God my all — “all that I know” and “all that I do not know.” I could not give Him any more.

Were I to kneel at an altar rail today and consecrate myself to God all over again, the bundles would be vastly different in size from the original ones. The big bundle now is marked “all that I know.” Many times since that night in my boyhood church, the divine hand has reached into the bundle which was then marked “all that I do not know,” and pulled out something, now to be known. Then I have been confronted with the soul-penetrating question: “Did you really mean what you said that night? Are you willing to consecrate this also? Can this now be placed in the other bundle ‘all that I know?’”

I believe that each time I have been able to say “Yes, Lord,” I have endeavored to live in a continuing covenant of obedience to Christ.

Gifts

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “I do not want you to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts” (I Cor. 12:1). In the New Testament Church, extraordinary powers, known as “gifts” (in the

Greek, *charismata*) were given to selected Christian individuals for the purpose of serving the church in specific ministries.

A study of the New Testament Epistles reveals at least five characteristics of those spiritual gifts.

1) They are charismatic in nature. They are the gifts of God's grace, totally unmerited from any human viewpoint.

2) They have a common source — the Holy Spirit. Paul calls a gift a "manifestation of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12:7).

3) There is a variety of spiritual gifts. In I Corinthians 12 Paul speaks of "diversities of gifts" (v. 4), "differences of administrations" (v. 5), and "diversities of operations" (v. 6).

I believe there are nine *gifts* (I Cor. 12:8-10). Three of the gifts are "revelation" gifts — the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the discerning of spirits. Three of the gifts are "worship" gifts — prophecy, tongues, the interpretation of tongues. Three of the gifts are "power" gifts — faith, healing, miracles.

In my study I discovered ten *administrations*: apostles, prophets, teachers (pastors/teachers), helps/government (administration), evangelists, ministry, exhortations, giving, ruling, showing mercy.

The nine *gifts* plus the ten *administrations* result in 19 *operations* of the Spirit.

4) The distribution of the gifts of the Spirit is in accordance with divine wisdom. Paul writes: "all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (I Cor. 12:11). As the offer of the Gift of the Spirit is a revelation of the divine love, so the distribution of spiritual gifts is an evidence of the divine sovereignty.

5) Every gift of the Spirit is to be used for the good of the total church. Gifts are not to be received as personal privileges or hoarded as spiritual treasures. The Pauline statement is clear: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (I Cor. 12:7).

My study of the gifts of the Spirit has led me to three deepening convictions about their use. First, the possession of a gift of the Spirit is never the sole evidence, or even primary evidence, of a person's having received the Gift of the Spirit.

Second, it is neither the privilege nor the responsibility of the Spirit-filled Christian to seek any particular gift of the Spirit for himself/herself. The Spirit is sovereign in this matter. He selects whom He will, upon whom to bestow a gift (I Cor. 12:11). The Spirit-

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filled Christian's responsibility is to be totally yielded to the Spirit, sensitive to His influence, and receptive to whatever He offers.

Third, a sure evidence of the validity of a gift of the Spirit is its constructive effect upon the total body of believers. Gifts are to be used for the common good (I Cor. 12:7), never for the dividing asunder of the Body of Christ. I am always alarmed when the profession of a spiritual gift results in division and faction. All spiritual gifts are to be used within the parameters of the Church and such use should contribute to the spiritual wholeness of the Body of Christ.

Fruit

The Gift of the Spirit is for every Christian believer. The gifts of the Spirit are for selected believers, as the Spirit chooses. When we speak of the fruit of the Spirit, we are dealing with another spiritual universal. Every Spirit-filled individual will manifest the fruit of the Spirit, for the Spirit produces a certain quality of spiritual character in those in whom He dwells. In the final analysis, the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit is the real confirmation of the reality of the Spirit-filled life. The judgment is to be made according to the fruit test rather than the gift test. In spiritual experience truth and character are more important than signs and miracles.

I discover some significant truths in the Pauline passage which delineates the fruit of the Spirit. For one thing, I sense again the operation of the universal law of cause and effect. In an orderly universe every effect must have an appropriate and adequate cause. This is just as true in the spiritual realm as in the physical world.

St. Paul points out that when the flesh, unsanctified flesh, the sinful self, is dominant in one's life and controls it, then the effects are inevitably the works of the flesh. The Living Bible says: "When you follow your own wrong inclinations, your lives will produce these evil results" — and then follows the listing of the works of the flesh — (Gal. 5:19-21).

But the opposite is just as true. When the Holy Spirit controls one's life, the result is the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

This Pauline passage also confirms the Christ-like quality of the content of the Spirit-filled life. What does it mean to be spiritual? It

means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means to be filled with Jesus Christ. What more apt description of the spirit and life of Jesus Christ can be found than in the Pauline picture of the fruit of the Spirit?

There are three fruits for God to feed on — love, goodness and faith. Love is uninhibited devotion to God and a benevolent outreach toward others. Goodness is purity of heart manifested in rightness of life. Faith is conviction and confidence, resulting in commitment and influencing character and conduct.

There are three fruits for others to feed on — joy, gentleness, meekness. Joy is more than a spasmodic outburst of hilarity. It is an abiding enthusiasm for life based on one's deep underlying faith in the God who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all Life. Leslie Weatherhead reminds us that the opposite of joy is not sorrow, but unbelief. Meekness is humility which expresses itself in a patient acceptance of one's state. Humility means a proper creator-creature relationship. Gentleness is kindness, manifesting itself in a gentle disposition, a gentle approach to others and gentle deeds.

There are also three fruits for one's self to feed upon — peace, longsuffering and temperance. Peace is security because of one's right relationship to God. Longsuffering is patience. It is steadfastness in the presence of difficulties. Temperance means self-control and discipline. The Spirit-filled life is the disciplined life.

On the basis of Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit, let us create a composite picture of the Spirit-filled person. Here is a person with a loving heart, for the fruit of the Spirit is love. This person has a singing voice, for the fruit of the Spirit is joy. The brow is not ruffled, for the fruit of the Spirit is peace. There are broad shoulders, for the fruit of the Spirit is patience. The hand is gentle and the face is honest, for the fruit of the Spirit is kindness and it is also goodness. This person has a confident mind, for the fruit of the Spirit is faith. This person has a bearing which is contented, for the fruit of the Spirit is meekness. The Spirit-filled person walks with guarded step, for the fruit of the Spirit is discipline.

Likewise, this passage on the fruit of the Spirit reveals the necessary process of Christian maturity. One of the translations speaks of "the harvest of the Spirit." The harvest in the physical world has to grow, in accordance with the laws of nature. Just so, in the spiritual realm the harvest is dependent upon the process of maturity in accordance with spiritual laws.

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Does Paul give us a key in relation to our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the process of Christian maturity? I think that he does. Look at the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit — love. Now look at the last mentioned aspect — discipline. Is not the secret of one's growth in grace dependent upon the disciplined responses of love on our part to all else?

I believe that the first suggestion I received that the fruit of the Spirit is actually love in its manifold manifestations came from Dr. Paul S. Rees. He spoke in his own inimitable style:

Joy is the gladness of love. It is love in relation to the world. Peace is the quietness of love. It is love in relation to one's self. Longsuffering is the patience of love. It is love in relation to suffering. Gentleness is the graciousness of love. It is love in human relationships. Goodness is the character of love. It is love in relation to morality. Faith is the confidence of love. It is love in relation to the totality of life. Meekness is the humility of love. It is love in relation to God. Discipline is the self-control of love. It is love in constant training.

Gift — gifts — fruit! Have you received the Gift of the Holy Spirit since you became a Christian believer? Are you living in a mood of sensitivity and responsiveness to the Spirit's gifts without any unwholesome tensions in over-desiring a particular gift or in vain attempts to receive a gift? Is your daily life manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, giving evidence to all that the Holy Spirit dwells within?

Whatever is your spiritual need now, let the Holy Spirit meet it. Be receptive to His inflow; open every part of your being to His fullness.

Prayer:

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine. Amen.

—Edwin Hatch

