

Use and Misuse of the Gift of Prophecy

by Smith Wigglesworth

The gifts of the Spirit are to minister to the rebellious and to bring people to a place of blessing, and we must be filled with the Holy Ghost to use them.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:8

Topics: "Prophecy", "Gifts of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Smith Wigglesworth emphasizes the significance of understanding and properly utilizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gift of prophecy. He stresses that these gifts should only be exercised for the glory of God and must be rooted in humility and the power of the Holy Spirit. Wigglesworth warns against the misuse of prophecy, highlighting the need for discernment and the dangers of operating in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. He encourages believers to remain filled with the Holy Spirit to manifest these gifts effectively and to avoid the pitfalls of pride and worldliness. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper thirst for God and a commitment to living in the Spirit to experience the fullness of His gifts.

Transcript

This morning I believe the Lord will impress us with the necessity of understanding the gifts of the Spirit: Why and when and where we should manifest them. I have been trying to impress upon you the importance of being filled with the Holy Ghost, but I do not want you to think that you can understand or use gifts apart from the Giver. I know that the Holy Ghost has nine gifts to minister, and I know that Jesus has gifts, and you will never find that the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the gifts of Jesus clash. They are perfectly in order.

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians we read that Jesus went up on high and received gifts for men, [Ep 4.8] and the most remarkable of all is that he received gifts for the rebellious. Paul knew that, because God had been ministering to him gifts, and yet he was the most rebellious of all. When you look at that calling and see the remarkableness of his life and see how he persecuted the church, [1Co 15.9] and then in his examination of his own personality, his weakness, he calls himself the chief of sinners. [1Ti 1.15] And in that revelation, realizing how God had been gracious to him, he writes here, "even the rebellious also." [Ps 68.18] So all the people in this place, without exception, are eligible for the gifts. It is not what you were or are; it is what God will do for you, and you must see that by the power of God all things are possible. [Mk 10.27] He wants every person in this place to know that he is not and never will be pleased with a fig tree that bears nothing but leaves. Jesus was disappointed in it. [Mk 11.13]

Never think that gifts can ever be of any source whatever; only on the lines they have to be exercised, wrought out by the power of God. You must never allow yourself to be led into any trap to use a gift. If you do, you will surely have trouble in your life. You must understand that all the gifts are to be made manifest only for the glory of Jesus. Everything that you have come heir to since you came into the fact of salvation, everything from that day, without exception, has been and must continue to be for the glory of God. If it is not, you will find yourself amongst the wood and the hay and the stubble. [1Co 3.12-13] There is nothing going to be of any importance to your life or any other lives, only that which is gold and silver, and precious stones; something that cannot be destroyed by fire. And so God would have us this morning to have an inward revelation that we have been delivered from the corruption of the world, so that the powers of Christ may rest upon us, that the glory of God may be seen, and that we may be inwardly and outwardly always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord, that the life of the Lord should be always eminently manifested to the glory of God.

[Tongues and interpretation. "The Lord of glory came from the heights thereof to dispense of his graces in the world, in the church; to establish and bring forth a ministry of power that should permeate the earth, and bring to naught the things that are.]

One of the reasons why Jesus came was to make in the world new orders in the Spirit. We must this morning see our vocation in the Spirit. We must under all circumstances understand that God has something far in excess of that day when we first saw the light. You must see that he took your sins only for one purpose: That you might be channels for the covenant of promise.

The fourth of Ephesians is very distinct on this line: That Jesus went up on high, and he made prophets, apostles, evangelists, and teachers, [Ep 4.11] and it was for "the perfecting of the saints," [Ep 4.12] of which you will see the need. God has nothing in his ministry for us on any lines; only perfection. God is a cleanser. All the mighty movings of God are always to purge you, perfect you, make you holy, make you see that he can dwell in you mightily, and move in you by the Spirit gloriously. We have to be insulators, as it were, of the mighty power, the saving power in the world. There is such a thing as a preserving power; God wants us to be a preserving power in the world, that sin may have no place where we are; God controlling everything we touch.

Did you hear me say that you must not expect gifts until after you have received the Holy Ghost? Gifts are the property of the Holy Ghost, and they do not clash, as I said, with the gifts of Jesus. If you are filled with the Holy Ghost, he will drive you, from day to day and hour to hour, to the truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, [Jn 14.6] and the word of God is the power of the Christ and the life of Christ.

It will be no comparison, however you are filled with the Spirit, however you are filled with joy, whatever peace you have, and whatever conditions are in your life, to your leaving out the word of God. If you do, you will leak out and become weak; your peace will fade and your joy will leak out. The word of God brings one into a place of fact. We must be in a place where we know what we know, and the baptized believer knows what he doesn't know. He has forgotten a lot that he used to know, and that is a blessing.

Now beloved, we dealt with the word of wisdom, and we must clearly understand about the power of the Holy Ghost within the body. Paul says, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of spiritual gifts." [1Co 12.1] We must examine ourselves and see if we are in this faith, for I reckon that all the spiritual revelations of God are on the lines of faith, and you cannot have faith without you have the word, for the word of God is faith. If you will turn to Hebrews 12.2 you will find that Jesus is the author and finisher of

our faith; [He 12.2] so if you have Jesus you have faith. You will have the Giver within you. And as you let the word of God move in your life, you will find you are living in the real place of the personality of Jesus Christ.

In the first place the Holy Ghost must make within you ministrations, in the second it must be in operation, and the third essential is the manifestation. If you are afraid of manifestation you haven't come into operation, and if you are afraid of operation, it is because you never had ministrations. The same Spirit will bring you these three effects, and when they are in your heart and life, you will find God takes you and moves upon you just as he did upon Moses and Aaron, and Samuel and the prophets. The difference between the dispensation of the Jews and the dispensation of grace to the gentiles, is this: In the days of the prophets the Holy Ghost was upon them from time to time. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Samuel from time to time; the Spirit of the Lord came upon Moses, upon Samson; it came upon Ezekiel and the prophets. These operations were types of the greater dispensation of things to come. Remember this is an important matter, because if you hear the word of God and do not take heed you will come into the line where God uses the gentiles to perfect the Jews. Without us the Jews cannot be made perfect. So we are living in a great day; we are in the dispensation of the grace of God, with the fullness of the revelation of the inward power, personality, and presence of the Holy Ghost. And so we are in a greater day in every way than the Jews were. Not that the day isn't coming for the Jews; it is, but we are in a greater day than the Jews have had heretofore.

God has an appointment with every baptized soul, and his appointment is that we are in the earth for the specialty of witnessing and bringing out the glories of the cross. No baptized soul who is going on with God can ever again enter into worldly things as long as he lives. And God will strip him of all superfluities and of foolishness. If you are not stripped of worldliness there becomes a mixture in the church instead of a perfect place in God. Mixtures are always bad; that is why there was to be no mixture in the priest's garment; it had to be pure linen and pure wool. [Dt 22.11] I find that the world is becoming worse and worse on these lines because she is full of mixtures. When you go to shop you never know whether you will get the pure article or adulteration. The Spirit of God is no mixture. If, after you have received the Holy Ghost you go back into carnal lines, the people will know it. The man who is going on with God can tell it in a minute. You cannot deceive him. Language is not Spirit, and noise is not Spirit, and you cannot get it that way. The power of God is presence. Moses said, "Except thy presence go with me, I will go not hence." [Ex 33.15]

If the gifts of the Spirit are not in the church, you can call it what you like; it is a back-letter church. You can be baptized in water a thousand times; it will not make the Spirit move. You will have to have something better than water baptism. You will have to have fire. You will have to have the inward presence of God. Where the Holy Ghost comes the gifts are manifest, unless the church has backslidden, and Ichabod [1Sa 4.21] is over the door. Oh you can backslide, and there is not a grace that you cannot forfeit! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." [1Co 10.12] There is only one way for every one of us to keep faithful, and that is down in humiliation, brokenness of spirit, living victorious over the natural, and having the light of life in our being.

I have had people say to me, "You know I once had the gifts of healings and I haven't them now." I never believed it, whatever they say, for the simple reason that when the gift is manifested, that is the permanent gift; it is always there. But I would go so far as to say you may be so filled with the Holy Ghost that a gift may be manifested because of the fullness of the presence of God in your body. If you lived in the place where the power of God was upon you, that the virtue of Christ passed through you, and if you haven't that

fullness now, it is because you have passed out of the depths of God. Do not say you do not know how it happened. You always know. A stranger can never enter into your heart. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," [Pr 14.10] but a stranger can never enter into its recesses.

I warn you that if you want to continue to have the power of God manifested through you, you have to live in the Spirit continually; not occasionally, not once a day, but always. Oh beloved, at any cost, pay any price to live in it, for it is worth the world. I would rather speak five minutes under the unction of the Holy Ghost than to have a thousand dollars given to me. I thank God we may live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, and be continually filled with the Spirit. Then the gifts of healings will be manifested on these lines, and you will find that when God gets you to that place he will make you definite.

For instance, I was speaking in a meeting in a place, and as I sat in that meeting I saw a man there in a state of terrible pain. I said, "Brethren, you must allow me to deliver this man so he can enjoy the services." He came on the platform. It is a wonderful thing when the Spirit of God comes upon you and you are not touching a person in fear, not experimenting, but are in a place where you know. I told the people this man would be healed the moment I laid my hands upon him, and upon the pledge of God's truth to me, I rebuked the thing and he was perfectly free to all the people's amazement.

Here is another instance: I just received a letter from Springfield, Missouri, about a man for whom I prayed. His mouth was filled with cancer, and he was in pain all the time. I said to the people, "This man will be delivered of this cancer and be made free within a few days. From the moment I put my hand upon his mouth he will have no more pain." The moment I did that, instantly the pain lifted. Now I have this letter: "You will be interested to know about the man with the cancer. One day he spit out half of the cancer and the next day the balance. He lost about a quart of blood and is weakened as a result, but God has surely undertaken."

Now gifts of healings, miracles, are identical with what God's word says. It is not what we think, it is not how we feel; it is what God's word says. Dare you believe it? Jesus speaking expressly to the 70 who went out and came back saying what wonderful things had happened, said, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." [Lk 10.19] But let me say this: No man will go forward with God if he gets proud. To keep in touch with God he must continue humble. You will never find that God can use a man who is proud. His word says, "Show me thy salvation; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad," [Ps 34.2] and you will find that God is preparing the hearts of the humble to receive his word. "The rich are sent empty away"--the people who feel they can manage without God, but "the hungry he fills with good things." [Lk 1.53]

And so God would not have us under any circumstances to think that we are in the place of blessing when we are not in the place of humiliation and humbleness. It cannot be. Jesus, our blessed Lord, was the most meek, the most lovely, and the most beautiful in character. You never find him like this: "Stand aside now. I am a man who has the gifts!" You never find that in Jesus, but he was so moved with compassion that he could raise the widow's son. [Lk 7.11-17] We will not have had compassion except by the inward power of God moving us. Everybody can be humble. It costs nothing except your pride and ugly self to be put out of the way.

Now what is a miracle? It is where the power of the Spirit of God comes to absolute helplessness, where no human aid can reach, but where God alone comes and performs the supernatural; when God comes and the body is made whole in a minute--not in an hour or a week, but in a minute--that is a miracle.

I was going into a big meeting in London one day and a man who stood in the doorway said to me, "Don't you know me?" I said, "No, I do not recognize you just at this moment." "Don't you know my daughter?" he said. "No." "Nor my wife?" They all stood there. "No, I seem to have lost recollection of you." "Well," he said, "I am Smith from Brighton." Then I recognized them. "Now," he said, "look at her," turning to his daughter, a beautiful young woman. They brought her to me stretched out in a carriage where she had been for years and years, helpless; had to be lifted about, and in a moment, as soon as God's touch came upon her, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, [Is 1.6] there wasn't a weakness. She was perfect and had been walking ever since. No man can do those things. There never has been a man living who could do it; only the man Christ Jesus, and if we wish to be used in that way we shall have to have him, know him, and understand him, for he is the Holy One.

The ministry of healing became so mighty in Australia that in some places I had to give up a day to minister to the sick, beginning at 9 and continuing until 4 o'clock in order to get through, praying with nearly 700 people. There is a chance for a lifetime. You talk about opportunity; I would not take the world's worth for the opportunity, and we ought to buy up our opportunities. You never will know what you have until you experiment upon what you have in faith. Every man that has ever done anything for God was amazed to find God respond the first time he ventured out in faith. I say all these things to you to move you into a living faith in God; for what will it profit me without some of you are turned into flames of fire? What will it profit me if I turn from these meetings and you have only heard my voice and seen me? God would never have John and Peter and James to move up and down the world and leave people where they found them. They were to make disciples of all nations, [Mt 28.19] and in the name of Jesus I am here, as it were, to make disciples; to create within you a deeper thirst and a longing for deeper things of God. If this is not my object I ought not to be here. We have a higher calling, a nobler calling, than to be fascinated with things of ourselves. It is not the fascination of ourselves, it is the inward fire that burns by the power of God, that attracts.

A very important gift is the gift of prophecy. I reckon no man can work miracles without he has gentleness, and no man can ever be a prophetic utterance for God without he is good. You will find that those gifts are in perfect conjunction with the graces. First, the word of wisdom: You will find love controls the word of wisdom, and you will find the word of knowledge is controlled by joy; faith coincides exactly with peace, and you will never have faith if you have not peace. Peace comes from an unmovable, established position on the word of God. Now you could not have gifts of healings without you knew something about longsuffering, and you could not have the gift of miracles without you knew something about gentleness; nor prophecy without you knew something about goodness.

We must never despise prophecy, [1Th 5.20] but I will tell you what you must do. You must always judge it, [1Th 5.21] and you will find that a person who refuses to have his prophecy judged is wrong inwardly, and his expressions are wrong outwardly. I know people think discernment is a wonderful gift, and this is striking the people who have discernment: I will tell you what would be a fine thing: If those who think they have discerning of spirits would display it upon themselves, they would get such a revelation of themselves in 12 months, they would not be harsh or critical of others. God does not want us to be harsh or critical of others. He means us to be filled with the Spirit.

Prophecy causes more trouble than anything else in the world. If you will turn to the Old Testament you will find prophetic utterances. Prophetic utterances beginning in the flesh and ending in the flesh are wrong. People do it because they like to be heard, and it destroys confidence. There are men who believe they have power to go up and down and make prophets. It is unscriptural, and I can prove it to a very

ordinary man. The man who would make a man a prophet is in a bad way, and the man who is willing to be made a prophet is in a worse way. No man can save you, no man can baptize you in the Spirit, no man can give a gift.

Turn to Ephesians 4:8: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." [Ep 4.8] Who is he that ascended up on high but Jesus? "He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." [Ep 4.11] No man has ever had the power to give these offices. The most you can do is to lay hands on a person to receive the Holy Ghost, which is a perfectly scriptural thing to do. I have seen hundreds receive the Holy Ghost while I have had my hands upon them, but was it I? No, but you may have the power of God so upon you and through you and in you, until from you will flow the healing virtue as from the body of Jesus, and when you touch people they will be healed.

I have touched people who were dying, and they have been instantly healed from head to foot. I remember one night going into a house where a woman lay dying. Her husband came to me and said his wife would like to say just a word before she passed away. I went in and took hold of her hand, and she said, "Sam, I am healed. The virtue from Smith is going all over me." She was perfectly healed in that touch.

And I believe too that if you are filled with the Holy Ghost you will create a desire for the Spirit, an inward thirst for God, and with the laying on of hands, the gift of the Spirit will be moving in that man. You do not bestow the gift, but the power of God works through you, and remember there is never a baptism of the Holy Ghost but what God is there. It is the promise of the Father. You never have a baptism of the Holy Ghost without Jesus is there, for he baptizes; you never have the baptism of the Holy Ghost without the Holy Ghost comes in, so you have the trinity there. Every touch of God that I get makes me to see how I need more of him all the time. I hope no one in this meeting will ever be so foolish as to allow any person to make you anything, but that you will all be willing to let God make you something.

Is prophecy real? It is just as real as anything else. When you have prophecy be sure it is the Spirit of God that gives it, and when it is given be sure it is nothing personal. There are foolish and ridiculous things taking place in some parts. I think a man ought to have the choice of his own wife, but when prophecy goes forth that you are to have a wife of their choosing, you are on dangerous ground. When prophecy goes forth that you are to have a certain house on a certain street, you know that is carnal. All these things make our position one of ridicule and a laughingstock in the eyes of the people. God save us from foolishness and from ignorance. How will he save us? When we are humble enough to be taught.

The deceptiveness of the devil is shown in prophecy tremendously. When prophetic utterances from the Lord go forth they are of great blessing to everybody, but where is the mistake? It often lies in people going up to the one who has given the message and saying, "Oh, I got so blessed through that prophecy. It was wonderful. We must have it written down," and you spoil the people who give the prophecy. It is a very serious thing because prophecy is a gift, and the seriousness of the thing is to use a gift without the power of God upon you. They begin to say, "Thus saith the Lord," and go on forever. Now listen: If the prophecy is not given in the unction of the Spirit, it will be damnation. It is blessed when clear prophecy comes through, because a person may have prophecy who knows very little of the word of God and yet have perfect prophetic utterance.

If you turn to the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and read the prophecy that Stephen utters, it is most sublime. As he prophesied under the power of the Spirit the power of the devil came upon those people; they couldn't stand it. It meant his death but it was in the power of the Spirit. There is something about prophecy that makes you know it is God. Here is a man in the assembly who starts in to pray. He has prayed many times in the assembly and you have been blessed, but suddenly you catch fire and you feel the inspiration as the Spirit prays through him, and you know when God has finished and when he begins his own prayer. The lesson to learn in Pentecost is when to finish, for it is a serious thing to go on after the Lord has finished. You begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh. The same thing is true of prophecy; they begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh.

Then there are some foolish people in the world who, when they know someone has the gift of prophecy, go around to his house and try to find out something by prophecy. That is as bad as going to a medium. Do you think you can get a prophetic message on those lines? Now listen: Wisdom is justified by her children, [Lk 7.35] and if you do not keep in wisdom, nobody wants anything to do with you, so do not work along those lines. If you want to know the mind of God, get it in the book; you do not need a prophet to tell you. God is his own interpreter.

I was saved when I was a boy 8 years old, and I have never lost the witness. I never went to school and so I had no chance to learn to read. When I got married, my wife taught me both to read and write, though she could never teach me to spell, but I do the best I can. I so love the word of God I do not remember spending any time but with the word. Papers and books have no fascination for me. The word of God is my meat and my drink. I get a fresh breath from heaven every time I read it. It is full of prophetic utterances that make my soul rejoice.

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